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China

MAOS LEGACY IN ANHUI

RURAL REFORM 1978-80

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MAO'S LEGACY IN ANHUI

RURAL REFORM 1978-80

Commentary on 'The Years After Mao Zedong'
40050430a *Shijiazhuang KUNLUN BAO* in Chinese,
15 Mar 89 p 1

[Article: "Hebei Author Wang Lixin's 3769 4539 2450 'The Years After Mao Zedong' Stirs Intense Reaction"]

[Text] Wang Lixin's "The Years After Mao Zedong—1978-1980: An On-the-Spot Report From Rural Anhui," which appeared in issue No 6 of KUNLUN [LOFTY PEAKS], is a long panoramic piece of reportorial literature that has become a hot topic of conversation in Anhui and has aroused an intense reaction.

On 21 January, the Hebei Provincial Writers Society, the KUNLUN editorial board, the Anhui Provincial Agricultural Economic Committee, and the Anhui Provincial Literature Federation held a joint seminar on this work in Hefei.

The conferees believe that, in comparison with the trend toward literary and artistic creative works about wishy-washy characters in a wishy-washy age, this is a fine work possessed of a high sense of historical responsibility and concern, and that also elucidates the people's and the country's fate. The work employs moving, complete, and accurate data and vigorous political fervor to portray the great transformation wrought by the contracting of production to individual households in rural Anhui. It employs a broad artistic angle of vision and a great momentum to reproduce the shocks and quakes of China's rural reforms, and it sings the praises of the spirited scene of Anhui peasants daring to wage a fateful war of decision to break extreme leftist pressure. The courage and insight of the author's straightforward writing, his factual narration and courageous re-examination of the very grave catastrophe that befell the good earth in the Chang Jiang and Huai basins, tracing matters to their source, provide food for thought.

Author Lu Yanzhou [7627 1750 0719] said: "This is the first serious work to use modern ideas systematically and critically to capsulize the difficult course of Anhui's rural reforms. It not only provides impetus for creativity in reportorial literature in Anhui, but also serves as an inspiration for creativity in novels in Anhui." Critic Gu Xiang [7357 7534] praised the work enthusiastically as a moving ode to China's rural reform and as a spectacular spindrift in the spring tide of current reportorial literature." Critic Wu Taichang [0702 3141 2490] termed this work "a new harvest in China's reportorial literary creativity."

People's Liberation Army Literature and Arts Press Deputy Director Han Ruiting [7281 3843 0080] chaired the seminar on the work. Most of the leaders of the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee, Anhui Provincial

Government, and Anhui Provincial People's Congress, as well as authors and critics Zhang Wenfan [1728 2429 5400], Yao Shanbi [1031 1472 1084], Chen Dengke [7115 4098 4430], Su Zhong [5685 0022], Jiang Liu [3068 3177], Jia Menglei [6328 1125 7191], Wu Bingjie [0702 4426 2638], Gao Ning [7559 1337], Huo Da [7202 6671], and Shan Xuepeng [0830 1331 7720] attended the conference.

Literary Work Portrays Anhui as Spearhead of Nationwide Rural Reform

40050430b *Beijing KUNLUN /LOFTY PEAKS/* in Chinese No 6, Dec 88 pp 4-53

[Article by Wang Lixin: Life After Mao Zedong: A Report on Implementation of and Consequences of Major Chinese Agricultural Policies in Anhui Villages]

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The End. "The Great Regression"—The Great Hurdling—Contracting of Output to Individual Households: A Historical Monument

Preface. Funeral March—1976: Whither China

1 On 9 September 1976, the Chairman of the Communist Party of China passes away!

2 All news broadcasts throughout the country are interrupted for the repeated reading aloud of the "Letter To Inform the Whole Party, the Whole Army, and All Nationalities of the Whole Country." Every word and every sentence of this obituary that came from out of the blue is like a powerful shock wave that penetrates everyone's heart. The flags stand at half-mast on Tiananmen Square, and every newspaper and magazine carries a black-bordered photograph of Mao Zedong. A solemn dirge pervades the airwaves of the republic. People have

witnessed death countless times before, but seemingly no one ever thought that tragedy would befall Comrade Mao. People cannot believe their ears, much less their eyes. The grief is overwhelming, and all China longs to pour it out.

The Chinese Communist Party cries!

The Chinese people cry!

The surging Huang He and the roaring Chang Jiang also wail.

Yes, Mao Zedong has come to the end of this tortuous, complex, and great course of a life that nature bestowed. A leader selected by history, Mao Zedong has been a pillar in whom people reposed confidence, and now that he is suddenly gone, people feel this is a tremendous and irremedial loss.

Mao Zedong's memorial services are solemnly held at Tiananmen Square. This is the first enormous state funeral held since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Within the same year, both Zhou Enlai and Zhu De passed away, and the trilogy of funeral rites seems to bring people's sense of despair to a peak.

The dirge sounds again!

It is as though an all-encompassing blizzard has swept across the entire country. Everywhere people are visiting mourning halls, and everywhere there are white flowers for mourning ceremonies. The rostrum at Tiananmen has lost its dazzling luster, becoming a solemn place. From the founding of the People's Republic of China to the review of the Red Guards during the Great Cultural Revolution, his countenance is imprinted on every column here, and every red brick here has listened attentively to the sound of his voice. Today, all this is a mournful historical memory.

At 0900, the memorial ceremony begins. This is just at the time when the sun gradually rises across the good earth from the east. The ancient country of China in Asia is a mammoth altar of mourning for the great sun that has fallen.

The good earth is trembling.

The ocean of people is sobbing.

Even the rushing trains slow their speed and sound their wailing whistles...

September is the time of the golden autumn, but for the Chinese people the harvest is very, very small. Very, very much has been lost. This disaster, seemingly unprecedented since time immemorial, will be engraved in the stormy and constantly changing annals of New China, engraved on bones, and inscribed in hearts.

3 The wheel of history does not slow because of the passing of a great man. As people gradually recover from grief, they begin to think about yet another serious problem:

"Now that Mao Zedong is gone, who will lead China?"

"Where will China head?"

Statesmen throughout the world likewise turn their questioning gaze toward China after the passing of Mao Zedong, and toward the starting of a new wheel of history in the years following Mao Zedong....

Chapter 1. Perilous Autumn—1978: The Great Anhui Drought

The Fiery Land

1 Let us now focus our literary camera on a stricken land in the southeastern part of the republic.

The soil is cracked.

The flowers are withered.

The dead leaves flutter down.

The fields are all burned brown.

No longer can a pleasing green vista be seen or the fragrance of rice be smelled across this vast expanse of land.

Anhui is located between the Chang Jiang and the Huai He, the Chang Jiang heading toward the sea, and the Huai He flowing eastward, with the peaks of the Dabie Shan range towering upward to form a western wall, and the Cui Range in southern Anhui rising in a wondrous south wall. This has always been a plentiful and delightful land.

However, a great drought such as occurs only once in 100 years is now scorching weary Anhui, and the 139,000 square kilometers of land between the Chang Jiang, which men of letters have extolled with words such as "at dawn, the ripples on the river are redder than fire," and the Huai He, extolled for "two banks of weeping willows hazy as smoke," is being burned brown by the scorching sun.

2 "There is no disaster more widespread than a flood, and no disaster more intense than a drought." On this globe in the boundless universe on which we humans live, droughts are particularly severe in Africa.

From 1972 through 1974, droughts seized hold of the countries on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. Hundreds of thousands of people died from starvation and thirst in Senegal, Niger, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, and Upper Volta, and more than 3 million head of livestock

died for want of water. Drought repeatedly attacked this same area during the past 10 years. During 1980 and 1981, not a drop of rain fell there; wells dried up, rivers stopped running, lake bottoms showed, and in the vast area from Ethiopia to Sudan fields lay barren and the soil turned white....

"This tragedy is truly alarming!" At the time, numerous newspapers and magazines used these words of astonishment, writing with deep concern, "How many people have starved and thirsted to death? It is even frightening to think about. In the area, the tragedy that befell some of the people could no longer move others, because famine and death were cruelly threatening everyone...."

Drought has a rather enormous influence on mankind's existence. Since ancient times, understanding and deliverance from one's own fate has been one of mankind's most intense desires. People have long dreamed of the day when they could shake free from the clutches of natural disasters, but the more they long to be free from disasters, the worse the disasters become, and the more miserable people become, the more they believe in deities. And what does God do? Pretend to be deaf and mute, not bestowing even a little bounty on the earth. People then turn around to condemn themselves for having offended God, pray devoutly, and burn incense and candles everywhere....

Oh God, where do you dwell...

3 The drought did not "forget" Asia...

Nor did the drought "forget" Anhui in China in eastern Asia...

In 1954, the great Anhui drought lasted 80 days...

In 1966, the great Anhui drought lasted 120 days...

One has to go back to AD 1856 for the longest major drought, which occurred in the first year of the reign of the Xianfeng emperor of the Qing Dynasty when no rain fell from spring until fall (equivalent to March to September in the western calendar). The bodies of the starved were strewn everywhere, and "several hundred li were devoid of life"...

However, these three great droughts "pale into insignificance" in comparison with the great drought of 1978.

This drought is truly soul-stirring.

This exceptionally great drought began in the winter of 1977 when little snow fell. The local people referred to it as the "warm winter." By spring of the following year, the "warm winter" became a prelude to the summer heat. A March drought provided the first hint, and, by August, the drought began to envelop all of Anhui. By the beginning of September, the great drought had already lasted for more than 6 months. In the hill regions

of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He, as well as in the mountainous area of southern Anhui, yields of early and intermediate rice fell seriously, and large tracts of late rice could not be transplanted. Autumn-harvested crops withered in the fields. In Chuxian Prefecture, large areas of soybeans, corn, and other late autumn crops failed. In that prefecture, obtaining water for people and livestock in more than 3,000 production teams was a rather serious problem, and part of the population of some production teams left for elsewhere. In Wuhu Prefecture, streams and ponds dried up completely and the bottoms of reservoirs became visible. In Guangde County, 180,000 of 220,000 mu of late rice were drought stricken and 92,000 mu of seedlings withered and died. Birds flying in the sky dropped to the ground, dead from thirst. Wild rabbits in the mountains and turtles in ponds died from the drought. At Hefei, the capital of Anhui Province, the temperature averaged between 32 and 36 degrees Celsius, and trees along the streets shed their leaves, presenting a scene of devastation.

The Chang Jiang and the Huai He wailed in despair...

Throughout the province, an overwhelming majority of rivers, the Chang Jiang and the Huai He excepted, dried up. The flow of the Chang Jiang also fell markedly, its water level falling between 1 and 2 meters from the previous year. The province's 10 major reservoirs (including five large reservoirs in the upper reaches of the Huai He) held only 2.3 billion cubic meters of water, 2.8 billion cubic meters less than in former years, and 3.6 million fewer mu were planted to rice seedlings throughout the province. Even when yield was calculated at 400 jin per mu, the paddy harvest was 1.4 billion jin short. In the hill region of Dingyuan, Fengyang, Jiashan, and Feidong Counties, quite a few communes and production brigades had no drinking water. They had to depend on the provincial military region, garrison field armies, and departments of the provincial, prefectoral, and county governments who delivered drinking water to them in more than 100 trucks.

The wind devil also exploited the weakness...

Three hot dry winds had blown since the beginning of the drought. The first was in April, just at the time when the wheat was at the in-the-milk stage. It blew for 10 days, and the temperature soared to 34 degrees C. The second time was in June, just when the early rice crop was in flower. It blew for 15 days, and the temperature stayed around 40 and 41 degrees C. The third time was around the "beginning of autumn" [in mid-August], when the wind blew for 20 days causing an intense evaporation of moisture...

Pestilence also began to spread...

Use of pond water for drinking caused outbreaks of more than 10 different diseases, one after another, including dysentery, paratyphoid fever, type B encephalitis, infectious hepatitis, and enterogastritis. In the Guanchizhou

Prefecture region, 74,700 people fell ill, a 42-percent rise over the previous year. In Huizhou Prefecture, between June and August a 79-percent rise over the previous year occurred in the incidence of hepatitis. In Zhedong Production Team of Yanggang Production Brigade in Laokou Commune, Jiashan County, 14 out of 20 households numbering 120 people fell ill, cutting the work force by one-third. Cholera, which had been eradicated, began to recur, cropping up in 12 counties and cities, including Dangtu, Wuhu, and Tianshang, during June. As the drought continued, measles, epidemic encephalitis, hemorrhagic fever, edema, night blindness, and cyanosis occurred...

The Anhui Provincial CPC Committee raised the slogan, "Lose a family fortune, but spare no effort in fighting the drought." The entire province from top to bottom joined posthaste in the struggle against drought. The provincial CPC committee and the provincial revolutionary committee organized more than 40,000 laborers daily to work on the front line in the fight against drought to avert disaster. Except for the Maanshan Steel Works, the Tongling Copper Mine, and the Two Huais Coal Mine, most enterprises no longer had electricity. Use of electricity to fight the drought shot up from 330,000 kilowatts to 470,000 kilowatts, and default on payment of electric bills reached 98 million yuan. Because of the extremely high expense of fighting drought over a long period of time, 22 million yuan that the central government had appropriated was already used up and 16 million yuan provided by the provincial government, 50 million yuan in loans, 58 million yuan in commune and production brigade funds, and 11 million yuan that the masses themselves had raised were also exhausted.

Despite the widespread opening up of water resources to fight disaster and fight the drought, people's strength was extremely limited against the threat of the drought. No matter what was done in the way of fighting and rescuing, a tremendous decrease in output for all of Anhui Province during 1978 was a foregone conclusion.

4 The autumn of 1978 was an autumn of no harvest and unrest.

Great Flight From Famine

5 Tens of thousands, no, hundreds of thousands of disaster victims with neither clothing enough to cover their bodies nor food enough to fill their stomachs set out from their homes, their possessions in baskets, ever so reluctantly saying good-bye to the native land where they had lived and multiplied to begin a distant journey begging...

Seething China put on two tragic performances that profaned civilization. One was from Sichuan Province, the land of plenty, where a virgin could be had for 1 dou of paddy, and the other was from Anhui with its surpassing landscape, where an army of beggars moved ceaselessly. From ice-bound and snow-covered Heilongjiang

Province in the north, to the verdant and boundless Xinjiang in the west, and south to Hainan Island where the waves lash the shores, there were people from Anhui wailing in misery and beseeching tremblingly.

Shanghai was packed with disaster victims from Anhui. Shanghai mobilized thousands of militiamen to surround and intercept the flow. Coerced by hoarse shouts and clubs, the disaster victims were driven like flocks of sheep into confined spaces that were dark and dank, and where insects crawled in the rotting rice straw. The militiamen crammed their frail bodies in, and once they had collected a sufficient number of people, they put them in sealed railroad cars to return them to strategically located Bengbu in eastern Anhui. These special trains were not just one or two, but more than ten, and then several score. However, frequently, no sooner had they returned when they turned around, held fast to the sides of another soot-covered train and fled with rumbling stomachs to some other place. Naturally, a begging career was not as familiar or as satisfying as their native land, but so long as they were willing to open their mouths, they could get some food to eat.

For them, the old villages provided nothing...

The land lay fallow.

Their grain sacks had dried up.

They were on the move, and being on the move was everything in life.

6 Begging Vignette I:

During the autumn of 1978, the harvest was really bad! At the Xiaoxihe Middle School where I went to school, there were so many beggars. One day when I left school I could not bear the hunger; all I wanted was to get something to eat. That evening when I got out of self-study, I slipped quietly through the school door and walked away, raising and lowering my feet carefully. After walking about 5 li, I entered a sloped field where little mounds of earth made me stumble. Squatting down and feeling with my hands, I found sweet potatoes. Gritting my teeth, I used my hand to dig up a sweet potato as big around as a finger, which I wolfed down dirt and all.

If only it could always be this way! Deciding to take the bull by the horns, I dropped out of school. The four of us, my mother, younger brother, younger sister, and myself, hung on to the sides of a train and went to a rural village in the suburbs of Nanjing.

The first time that I walked up to a household, without waiting for me to speak, a woman in the family asked me, "Where are you from?" "Anhui!" "What are you doing here?" "...Looking for a drink of water!" When

they saw the rimless bowl under my upper arm, they guessed I wanted food and shooed me away impatiently: "Get out, get out!" Even before I asked for food, they drove me away.

I really could not stand the humiliation of being refused all the time. I would rather lie in the sun and sleep, but my stomach always called out desperately, and my eyes stared blankly. So I crawled to my feet and tottered into another doorway. "Where are you from?" This time I did not dare mention Anhui, so I changed to "Nanjing" "I'm a fortune teller!" When people saw the stick I was carrying, they mistakenly took me for a fortune teller. As soon as they heard I had come to tell fortunes, several young girls, who had run out to see the excitement, started to laugh: "Other fortune tellers are blind; how is it that he is 'blind with open eyes'?" When I heard such taunting remarks, I was even more hesitant about opening my mouth, and I turned and fled.

My eyes filled with tears, I went to my mother and said, "I can't get anything to eat no matter what I do." "If I can't beg something to eat, what can I do?" My mother said: "Right, if you do not beg something to eat what can you do?" I was so sad that I could hardly speak...

7 Begging Vignette 2:

I went to a village in Zhejiang Province to try to get some food, but I suffered the same harsh treatment. Whenever I think of what happened to me, I feel bitter. Heaven knows how many times I had stolen a ride on trains or how many long roads I had traveled, but no sooner did I enter a village than I was discovered by the village cadres who seized me, and pulled and dragged me to the commune, asking me questions as they went along: "Why do you Anhui people come to Zhejiang looking for food?" "Hunger!" "No, You are certainly one of the four elements [landlords, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and bad elements]. "I am a real poor peasant!" "Poor and lower-middle-class peasants do not go begging. You are 'blackening' Zhejiang's good name!" There was no use in arguing. Later, I was sent to the county authorities who sent me to a resettlement depot in Shanghai. I had no idea that the people there would be even more vicious. They would bring a club down on you for the least little thing you did...

8 Begging Vignette 3 (Female):

...When I started begging, I was not quite 17 years old. I had seen Beijing, Tiananmen, the Great Hall of the People, and Chairman Mao's Memorial Hall only in the movies.

I climbed on a train and went to Beijing.

The locomotive on this train burned coal, and the wind blew till my whole body was covered with soot. It was a freight train that stopped all along the way. It had no schedule, so it took several days to get to some station or

another in Beijing. I jumped from the train quickly, but before I got out of the station, someone caught me. As soon as they heard I had come from Anhui, they sent me to the resettlement depot. Several people from Anhui were held there, old and young, male and female. I found out only later on that the name of the train station was Fengtai. I had not even crossed the threshold into Beijing. When I got back to the village, relatives asked me, "How was Beijing?" I cried out loud.

9 The history of the flow elsewhere of people from Anhui is a book as thick as the Chang Jiang-Huai He Plain.

10 Movie for Internal Reference

It happened during this agonizing autumn.

Correspondents from the Central Television Station came to Qianwang Production Team in Liyuan Commune, Fengyang County, Anhui Province. They had originally intended to film the new rural atmosphere in China 2 years after the smashing of the "gang of four," but what they found was nothing but desolation. A feeling of responsibility for the country and the people troubled them so much they were unable to sleep. They decided to film the scene of wretchedness, and take it back to Beijing for the CPC Central Committee so that the leaders could see the reality of just how grim life was in some rural villages of China in 1978.

Their documentary film was in color, but without accompanying commentary or captions. This befitting the oppressive and depressing scenes before which all were mute...

11 Scene 1...

A dark-green bus whizzes along, its dark-red wheels rolling soundlessly across the land in eastern Anhui.

From out of the thick morning mist, a small black spot appears dimly. It is a dark-colored village with several thatched houses that have been weathered by scores of storms and baked black by the scorching sun, which have crushed the low earthen walls to the verge of collapse.

There is no sound of a human voice, a dog's bark or a rooster's crow.

From only a small number of broken-off chimneys issue lazy plumes of smoke intermittently in evidence that people still live here.

As the camera lens presses nearer to the huts, one sees that the lopsided earthen doorways are blocked with mud slabs. From the extent to which the mud has solidified and hardened, it is not difficult to guess that the owners abandoned their homes no longer than 1 or 2 months previously...

12 Scene 2...

On the parched, cracked ground sits a stone roller with a broken housing. In another corner of the courtyard, rice straw is piled less than 1 meter high in vivid portrayal of the meager harvest.

On another plot of ground from which sweet potatoes are being harvested, the intense sun has scorched the soil till it is hollowed out like a bowl. A middle-aged man clothed in rags is holding a simple wooden plow that he is rocking back and forth to turn up the fruits from beneath mounds of soil. The sweet potatoes are as thin as chopsticks and scattered here and there in the hard and dusty soil. An old woman in tattered and much-patched clothing is following along behind the plow, stooping to pick up the sweet potatoes with gnarled hands.

13 Scene 3...

This is an ordinary home. The room is too small and too dark. You have to use a flashlight in order to clearly see the four bare walls inside. In a corner on one side is a propped-up rectangular wooden frame atop which rice straw is spread. This is a bed. There is no table or chairs. At the stove by the entrance is a frail woman working a clacking bellows. Now and then, thick smoke belches from the opening in the stove and envelops the woman. In an inky-looking liquid in a pot float several slices of mold-spotted dried sweet potatoes.

14 Scene 4...

A clothesline is stretched between two tree trunks with luxuriant and well-spaced leaves and branches, but the only thing drying is clothes with layer upon layer of patches, and stitches going every which way.

An adult man shows a naked and shriveled chest; a child has a bare bottom with many wrinkles, and even a woman has no single piece of clothing large enough to cover her two black, sweet potato-like breasts.

The cotton quilt has no cloth cover and the filthy cotton stuffing is loose, broken into pieces and hanging down in blobs. A whole family, young and old, uses it to cover their shivering frames and drive away the cold that does not want to retreat...

15 The movie for internal reference is only a short 10 minutes long, with no artificial effects or gimmickery. It is made up entirely of live, on-the-spot coverage, providing us a reality such as cannot be easily conveyed in words.

Finally, the film is sent to the Politburo where old comrades cry out, cover their faces with their hands, and weep upon seeing it. "After 29 years since liberation, how can anyone imagine such an impoverished village as this, and people bearing such degradation..."

Is this merely something to sigh about?

This is misery and despondency; this is astonishment and a calling out. Any member of the Communist Party of China with a sense of righteousness cannot remain silent in the face of such extreme suffering.

16 Does this hopeless situation of being "at the end of one's resources with no way out" mean that this is the eve of a reform that will rock China's rural villages? The spring tide will pound the dikes of the ultraleft and quietly flow into Anhui, the Huai He, and the Chang Jiang...

Chapter 2. The Enlightenment of the Pioneers--1961: Anhui's "Responsibility Fields"

Hunger, a Global Issue

1 In 1981, in his research report on the future of mankind titled *The Next 100 Pages*, the founder of the Club of Rome, Aoleiliao Peixi (?1159 7191 0448 1159 0160 6007) wrote the following astonishing words: "In 1977, we conducted the most recent world food survey. Good heavens! In developing countries, there are between approximately 450 million and 500 million people, most of them women and children, suffering from serious malnutrition. The diet of an additional several hundred million people is very poor. The number of hungry and malnourished people is greater than at any other time and is steadily increasing..."

In his very influential 1984 book, *Whither Mankind*, the Soviet doctor of jurisprudence and chairman of the Political Society Ge Naxiezhalov (?2706 4780 6378 2089 5012 1133) also wrote sorrowfully that "almost 1 billion people on the globe are on the verge of starvation. In 1979 alone, which was declared Children's Year, 12 million children under the age of five died untimely deaths from malnutrition..."

Starvation occurs mostly in Third World countries with large populations, weak foundations, and backward technology. Mankind, with such a long civilization, has had such grave calamities. In mankind's quest for freedom to decide his own fate, there is no issue more bitter or more chilling than hunger.

In China the penetrating question is whether hunger dares to be acknowledged?

No matter how it is glossed over, China is no exception when it comes to hunger. Hunger is not just hunger; it is also a product of nature, ecology, history, culture, psychology, and innate disposition. Complete emancipation of mankind's fate requires testing in the midst of struggle, appeals, puzzlement, and perplexities. Therefore, understanding everything, encompassing everything, containing everything, dissecting everything, and evaluating everything becomes a transcendental step. This transcendence is bound to influence major economic and political reforms, and a decisive live-or-die, flourish-or-perish battle is inevitable.

In 1961, China's rural villages went through just such a decisive battle!

2 1961-1978...

1978-1961...

When Father Time snaps his fingers lightly, catastrophes begin a new cycle. Seventeen years ago, a major famine that shocked China engulfed Anhui. Now, 17 years later, an exceptionally severe drought such as is encountered only once every 100 years has struck Anhui and, astonishingly, a historical tragedy is being replayed!

Those years are not far distant by any means.

Those circumstances are not unfamiliar by any means.

Just how did all this begin and develop?

In trying to reveal the secret of the ages that has remained hidden for so long, we might as well direct our gaze to the world's first socialist country, the USSR, and re-examine the collective farms model and their projection to China's people's communes. "large in size and collective in nature"...

Lenin's Change

3 In 1921, a major catastrophe also occurred in the USSR.

As a result of depredations of an imperialist blockade and civil war, rural villages sank into unprecedented dire straits. During the short space of 2 years in 1921 and 1922, more than 5 million people (mostly disaster victims along the Volga River) died of starvation and pestilence. The Volga River became a river of suffering.

In a long poem by Vladimir Mayakovski mourning Lenin's death, this tragedy was termed the "1,000-day Volga River famine" inasmuch as the October Revolution had been completed about 1,000 days earlier.

The Soviet Union was trembling.

Lenin was reflecting.

After the last bastion of Czarist Russian capitalism, the Winter Palace, fell to an October Revolution cannonade, the USSR began the all-out building of socialism. However, in the face of a small peasant economy as boundless as the seas, the peasant problems that had to be solved by the proletariat that had seized power were far more complex and far more difficult than had been estimated.

With no experience in his own country as a basis, and without external experience from which he could borrow, Lenin espoused the "direct transition to communism" "on the basis of communist principles." He put this thinking into effect in the birth of a new system of collective farms.

The Soviet Union adopted a series of administrative, regulatory, and economic support actions with regard to the collective farms. Priority was given to the distribution of large amounts of top-quality land; special emphasis was placed on farm implements, livestock, and other means of production; and large amounts of funds were provided. Despite the extremely straitened circumstances of the Soviet Government, 1 billion rubles were provided to support collective farms.

Nevertheless, returns were minimal.

Collective farms, accounting for 0.4 percent of the country's total land area, provided only 0.04 percent of the country's surplus grain during 1919 and 1920. The land was the best, but returns from it dwindled. The contribution of peasant households on collective farms was far lower than the average for peasant households in the country. In Moscow, Lenin received numerous letters of appeals from peasants, and he accepted requests for visits by peasants from everywhere, whom he questioned about difficult production and living conditions. At the first congress of agricultural communes and laboring groups at the end of 1919, Lenin candidly pointed out the following fact: "Communes have only aroused peasant resentment. The term, 'commune' sometimes even becomes a slogan for opposition to communism, but such a situation occurs only when peasants are forced to join communes." "The artificial building of false communes...is a very dangerous matter."

Why did the peasants not welcome collective farms? Just what means and what policies could be used to induce the peasants to take the socialist road? Lenin finally reached a conclusion: Elimination of the system of private ownership of land was something that "economically, there was no reason at all for not being able to do, the difficulty lay in their concern for personal welfare." "Concern for the peasant's personal welfare must be the basis."

In the spring of 1921, at the critical juncture when the first hint of a major catastrophe appeared, Lenin began implementation of his New Economic Policy, changing from the system of requisitioning surplus grain to a grain tax, restoring the circulation of commodities, and instituting free trade among peasants, making them small commodity producers in fact as well as in name. At the same time, while retaining the system of public ownership of land, he abolished a series of discriminatory policies against the peasants. The "Land Code" of 1922 recognized the peasants' real land-use rights, and the peasants could deal in land freely and independently. The peasants warmly welcomed this series of policies.

Obviously, the New Economic Policy retained the features of both individual peasant farming and small commodity production, which were also restricted by the new condition of public ownership of the land. Nevertheless, mere retention of individual farming was not enough; there had to be an organization to connect the state and the peasants, which Lenin felt could only be cooperatives. Cooperatives enabled the state to adjust to the situation of small commodity production and gave impetus to the development of small commodity production. At the same time, cooperatives linked small commodity production and the social economy, guiding scattered small commodity production to the path of socialist large-scale production.

History shows this change in Lenin's thinking to have been completely correct. In summarizing the lessons of this period, Lenin said, without any effort at concealment, that "We had originally intended (or it might be more accurate to say that we had not completely decided on) the direct use of proletarian country decrees in a country having small-scale agriculture to readjust national production and the distribution of products in accordance with communist principles. Real life showed we were mistaken."

This was a precious legacy earned through difficult exploration and the payment of an expensive price. Regrettably, within a short period of time we successors did not study it and value it, and a painful detour that could have been avoided ensued...

Stalin's Tragedy

After Lenin's death, his successor, Stalin, began to implement new policies. Before long, he drew up leftist policies that violated the principles of cooperativization, such as depressing prices of agricultural products, and widening the "price scissors" between industrial and agricultural products, which aroused strong peasant opposition, and fomented the "Grieziya Rebellion." Faced with a riot situation, he had no choice but to adopt the famed "April Concession Policy."

This policy did not last long, however. In 1926, Stalin put forward an even more leftist policy in a change from limitations on rich peasants to the annihilation of rich peasants. The rich peasants at this time were actually peasants who had become rich through the development of production after implementation of the New Economic Policy. As a result, a grain crisis resulted, with grain output decreasing 30 percent. On this occasion, Stalin did not absorb the lessons of experience. Instead he subjected the peasants to great pressure, artificially pushing to a higher level the still-developing cooperatives, and going in big for collective farms.

Stalin's method was extremely simple: The peasants' land, livestock, and implements were confiscated; the peasants were forced to join collective farms; and they

were forced to sell grain. Rich peasants who opposed the collective farms had their property confiscated and they were collectively banished or even executed. This terrorist policy peaked in 1931.

Stalin decided that the collectivization of farms in principal grain-growing areas had to be completed before the beginning of spring sowing in 1931. Beginning in January 1931, daily reports had to be submitted on the extent of collectivization, and newspapers published weekly reports on the number of new collective farms formed.

1931 was the year in which collectivization peaked, and it was also the most difficult year of the First 5-Year Plan. In 1930, 46 percent of the entire harvest of the northern Caucasus region was taken by the government, and in 1931 63.4 percent was taken. This meant that there was not nearly enough grain to meet the needs of rural villages where 80 percent of the population lived. Such a policy of coercive and indiscriminate procurement resulted in the butchering of horses everywhere in the USSR, which led to the exceptionally great famine of 1932. In Sevastopol and other southern areas, famine existed everywhere, suffering was severe, and the death rate was extremely high. The infant mortality rate was astounding. In some villages, all 1- and 2-year-olds died.

During 1933 and 1934, the Soviet writer Kesiqielin (?4430 2448 2212 2651) visited this region, which he sadly described as follows:

Once I had opportunity to travel through more than 10 villages in the Sevastopol region, going along the Don and the Kuban Rivers... Wherever I went, the windows of houses were boarded up, and the place empty. In the fields, all kinds of implements had been thrown everywhere in a scene of desolation.

On a deserted road, I came upon a peasant carrying a pack on his back. We stopped, smoked a cigarette, and exchanged information about each other. I asked him, "Comrade, where are you going?"

"To jail."

Astonishment made me unable to say anything or to ask anything.

I simply looked at this old man, startled... He smoked a cigarette quietly and told me about himself in an extremely calm manner. He was a middle-class peasant who had been sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for not wanting to join a collective farm...

Such harsh measures aroused peasant resistance and led to a serious decline in agricultural production. By the time of the harvest season in August 1931, the collectivization of farms stood at 90 percent, but what was the fate of the remaining 10 percent of the peasants? In 1929, the USSR registered 23 million peasant households, but in 1934, following complete collectivization,

only 17 million remained. Of the 6 million households that had disappeared, some had been banished or jailed, and the remainder had died of starvation. Grain-growing regions such as the Ukraine, and even the northern Caucasus, had been gutted by starvation. This was not entirely a natural disaster, but a manmade disaster.

In speaking of the painful lessons of total collectivization, Mikhail Gorbachev said pointedly:

"At the time, it was a conviction that all problems could be solved within a short period of time, and all parts of the country competed with each other to see who could collectivize most rapidly. Higher authorities issued instructions out of thin air and every jurisdiction recklessly violated the principles of collectivization.

"The people of our country paid a heavy price for these mistakes, and these mistakes also created serious consequences for our social life."

5 The unrest from "complete collectivization" affected other socialist countries that appeared subsequently and in which it had serious consequences. These countries got a bitter taste of the consequences of applying things mechanically.

What was extraordinarily valuable was that they dared to learn a lesson, correct mistakes, and free themselves from the shackles of dogmatism and to relate to their own countries the principles of a Marxist socialist agricultural cooperative system, thereby pioneering an illustrious road of their own to gain the initiative in escaping a poverty-stricken fate.

In Yugoslavia:

The Soviet model began by being applied mechanically, with more than 17,000 agricultural cooperatives being established throughout the country within a very short period of time. The results were contrary to wishes, agriculture retreating to the pre-1937 level.

Faced with this grim situation, Tito hardheadedly admitted defeat, and hardheadedly disbanded the cooperatives. Throughout the country, more than 7,000 cooperatives were disbanded in a trice. This was the first time anyone in the socialist camp had come forward to challenge courageously and sharply the Soviet model of collective farms.

In Romania:

Ceaucescu also had a puzzle difficult to solve and difficult to eliminate, because complete collectivization did not bring hope to Romania's rural villages, so, during the 1960's, there was no choice but to undertake the second cooperative campaign.

In Hungary:

In 1956, the cooperatives that had been earlier built by force were disbanded, new cooperatives being organized in 1957. In 1977, grain averaged 1,238 jin per capita, agricultural development being in the front ranks of developed countries.

Virtually every socialist country has carried out a new liberation and made new breakthroughs in order to free itself from hunger and poverty, seeking a road compatible with its own circumstances.

So, how about China?

Mao Zedong's Lessons

6 Nor was it possible to shake off the Soviet collective farm pattern and Stalin's tragedy in the development of China's rural villages.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 brought an end to the war and began a peaceful period of the building of socialism. The old adage that "it is difficult to start an undertaking and more difficult to safeguard a heritage" was confirmed in the person of members of the Chinese Communist Party. The ideas, plans, and steps that the party began to propose on rural policy problems during the period immediately following founding of the nation were based on a sober analysis of the situation in rural villages, and were rather consistent with reality. "Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Decisions on Agricultural Production Cooperatives," which was published in February 1951, noted explicitly that "Peasant enthusiasm for the individual economy in the wake of liberation is unavoidable. The party fully understands this characteristic of peasant small producers, and proposes that the enthusiasm of peasant small producers not be ignored or crudely stifled." On 16 December 1953, after 2 years of practice, the CPC Central Committee published "Decisions on the Development of Agricultural Cooperatives," which pointed out specifically that "the development of cooperativization must be based on the principle of voluntary peasant participation at all times and in all places."

The movement from temporary mutual aid teams to permanent mutual aid teams, and from elementary agricultural producers' cooperatives to the trial operation of a small number of advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives was done one step at a time. In November 1953, 47.9 million, or 43 percent of peasant households throughout the country were members of agricultural mutual aid cooperatives. There were 14,000 agricultural production cooperatives with a membership of more than 270,000 peasant households, or 0.57 percent of the total number of peasant households organized. The number of peasant households that had joined permanent mutual aid teams amounted to 24 percent of organized peasant households. The remaining temporary mutual aid teams of various kinds amounted to more

than 70 percent of organized peasant households. Splendid and varied, linked together, and proceeding in an orderly way step by step, the peasants supported them.

Nevertheless, when the high tide of socialist cooperativization loomed, some sharp contradictions erupted. In the process of advancing from elementary producers' cooperatives to advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives, some places violated the principle of voluntary participation and mutual benefit, infringing on the interests of the middle-class peasants. In many places the peasants killed pigs and slaughtered sheep in protest against the cooperatives. Next, the CPC Central Committee put forward a three-word policy of "halt, retrench, and develop" (halting development, retrenching development, and continuing development as circumstances in different areas warranted).

History presented China's agricultural cooperativization with an important new opportunity to make a choice. Were this policy to be continued, China's agricultural cooperativization could rid itself of the Soviet model of collective farms in the same way as Yugoslavia, Romania, and Hungary did to achieve synchronized revival and prosperity. Regrettably, Comrade Mao Zedong did not draw a lesson from the rebellion in productivity, but virtually copied Stalin's methods to force the "complete collectivization" of China. Thus, a golden opportunity was allowed to slip by in the development of China's agriculture.

"Ever since the formation of large cooperatives, life has been hard." The people of Anhui frequently speak of this stage of history with this feeling of regret. The "large cooperatives" mentioned here mean the advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives that began in 1956. After the Chinese peasants had gone through several years of full-scale reconstruction, a rise in popular morale, and prosperous days in production and daily life, they began to enter a period filled with madness and hardships. No sooner had the antirightist struggle of 1957 come to an end, Comrade Mao Zedong proposed the establishment of people's communes although the advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives of 1958 had not yet been consolidated. People did not want them, but because of the agitation to retreat from cooperatives during the spring of 1957, resulting from peasant wariness and dissatisfaction with the founding of advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives in 1956, with such agitation coming under merciless counterattack politically and ideologically during the antirightist struggle, it became necessary to complete a full escalation to people's communes that directly damaged economic relations, threw the normal order of rural economic life into confusion, and seriously hurt the peasant's interests.

In "Decisions on the Establishment of People's Communes in Rural Villages" of 29 August, the CPC Central Committee made erroneous judgments and faulty policy

decisions about the situation in rural villages, maintaining that "the realization of communism in China is no longer a matter for the distant future." Thereupon, many places throughout the country went ahead grandly to proclaim, "entry into a beautiful paradise of communist society from this time forward..."

The CPC Central Committee "Decisions About Various Problems Pertaining to People's Communes" of 10 December moved ahead anew with an ultraleftist policy. Its very first sentence read, "A new social organization, like a newly risen sun, has appeared on the vast horizon of east Asia." The decision praised the distribution system at that time, which linked the wage and supply systems, and endorsed the practice of "eating without paying," which was divorced from reality. At this time, the whole country was carrying out the antirightist struggle when many people were hotheaded. The headlong rush into people's communes, transplanting the pattern of Soviet collective farms, occurred in China in this way.

The will of the ultraleft leaders decided everything.

Great Insane Illusions

The period of the 1950's and the early 1960's was one of great insane illusions for the Chinese people. It was these great insane illusions that formed a prelude to the tragedy of widespread starvation.

Now, let us make an unbearable review, using Fengyang to provide perspective on all of Anhui.

From 1949 through 1955, that is, from the elementary agricultural producers' cooperatives to the advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives, gross output of grain rose from 9.9 million jin to 26 million jin in the first realization of the dream of having enough to wear and to eat that had not been attainable even during the era of Zhu Yuanzhang [AD 1328-1398, the founder of the Ming Dynasty]. However, just when people were looking forward to the beautiful prospect of "having electric lights and telephones upstairs and downstairs," the so-called Great Leap Forward campaign of people's communes "large in size and collective in nature," and "Catch Up With England and Surpass America" appeared.

Possibly the folk song sung by an Anhui peasant songstress known far and wide remains fresh in people's memories:

*The grain is piled to the sky,
I'm so tired my back and legs are sore.
I pick a piece of white cloud to wipe off the sweat and,
Close by the sun, I smoke my pipe.*

This was a song representative of the boastful atmosphere of 1958. However, in contrast to this enchanting song was the scene of desolation that old Commander Peng [Dehuai] lamented.

*On the grain sunning ground.
The sweet potato leaves have withered.
The strong young men have gone to smelt iron.
Leaving the children and the women to harvest the grain.*

The pots are broken! The shovels are snapped! The fields lie barren! The grain has been abandoned!

A peasant nation using extremely ancient production methods wants to catch up with and surpass in a single morning capitalist industry developed over decades or even 100 years.

A maddening rhapsody sounds.

8 Rhapsody No. 1

In the autumn of 1957, the USSR successfully launched the world's first artificial satellite. It was at this time that the word "satellite" began to enter China, and even this out-of-the-way corner in Fengyang became a "satellite launching site."

Perhaps the 14 June county CPC committee mobilization delivered at the county conference on fighting the drought to rescue the autumn harvest can be taken as representative of the boastful atmosphere prevailing in 1958. The slogan adopted at this conference was appalling and enough to arouse the deaf—"We demand a bumper harvest of all summer grain crops. We want to grow paddy with yields of 5,000-10,000 jin and then 20,000 jin per mu, sweet potatoes with yields of 10,000-20,000 and then 200,000 jin per mu, flue-cured tobacco with a yield of 3,000 jin per mu, corn with a yield of 2,000 jin per mu, soybeans with a yield of 1,000 jin per mu, yellow beans with yields in the double thousands, and ginned cotton yields of more than 1,000 jin per mu in the struggle to realize the glorious mission of an all-around major bumper harvest in 1958.

As of 17 September, the boastful atmosphere continued to heat up. The FENGYANG BAO of that date printed a special issue to report the important news of beginning to "launch a satellite"—

Fengyang Tobacco Experimental Station's Three Huge Satellites Boost Popular Morale

Estimates call for

4,200,000-jin per mu yield from the 16-mu No. 1 satellite field

4,50,000-jin per mu yield from the 15-mu No. 2 satellite field

4,80,000-jin per mu yield from the 18-mu No. 3 satellite field

However, the Great Leap Forward, which despised the laws of nature, incurred severe punishment from history. People never saw the majestic scene of a satellite traveling through the cosmos. These satellites blew up before rising into space, scattering numbing vapor and smoke.

The year 1958 saw a large bumper harvest, but even so, it did not reach the "satellite" goals. Grain, edible oil, and tobacco state procurement quotas were not met. Only 60 percent of the county CPC Committee-set requisition procurement of grain was fulfilled, only 29 percent of the oil-bearing crop quota was fulfilled, and only 81.2 percent of the tobacco quota was filled. At the same time, virtually everywhere throughout the county a lot of unrest erupted about a grain shortage. This unrest began earlier than in former years, and was particularly severe in bumper yield areas. It was on a larger scale than during the spring of 1956, and more serious.

The county CPC committee did not wake up in the face of failure, but continued its great boastfulness in order to show the correctness of its leader's intentions. In March 1960, at a critical juncture, when famine was hitting the entire county and the peasants' life was extremely difficult, the county CPC Committee unfeelingly declared "Illuminated by the general line, during 1959 we scored an all-around major bumper harvest in agricultural production. Grain output totaled 405 million jin, up 48.5 percent from the major bumper harvest year of 1957. High-speed development was achieved in oil-bearing crops, flue-cured tobacco, cotton, and other crops."

Just what kind of figures were these? They were really absurd.

In 1959, Fengyang County had only 1,412,000 mu of cultivated land, but this became 1,848,000 mu in reporting to higher authorities of the spring-sown area, more than 400,000 more mu having been added. Gross output of grain was 150 million jin, but 405 million jin was reported to higher authorities, more than 200 million jin increase. The actual area sown to flue-cured tobacco was 57,388 mu, but the amount reported to higher authorities was 137,400, or more than double. The actual number of hogs produced was 43,000 head, but 166,000 head were reported to higher authorities, 120,000 more than the actual number. A total of 468,500 mu was reported as having been reclaimed, when actually very little at all had been reclaimed, far less than the abandoned cultivated area. On the water conservancy front, 50 million cubic meters of earthworks had been built in the entire county during 1959 and 1960, but 210 million cubic meters had been reported to higher authorities. Nine communes, including Bangqiao, reported all farmland as being irrigated when actually they had not removed their reputation for a lack of water conservancy. In order to put on a good appearance in afforestation, large trees belonging to private commune members were transplanted to both sides of highways. Most of

them withered and died. Along the Huainan railroad line, a small number of fruit trees were planted, which became "making a garden" in the report to higher authorities.

In Xiaoxihe Commune, the boastfulness was most serious. Xiaoya Production Team in Wanluo Production Brigade reported that three oxen had plowed 36 mu in a single evening, and the commune praised both true and false telephone reports without distinction. Shimiao Production Team in Shanhe Production Brigade did not grow a single mu of rape, yet it reported having grown 120 mu to the production brigade. Feeling insufficient progress had been made, the brigade then reported to the commune that 210 mu had been grown. Shima Production Brigade reported a dazzling landscape with the "fragrance of rape flowers 10 li long, 1,000 li of sweet potato mountains, and 10,000 mu of fields, each producing 1,000 jin of paddy." The result was a harvest of enough rapeseeds to fill an earthenware jug from the place that reportedly had the "fragrance of rape flowers 10 li long." The "1,000-li sweet potato mountain" turned out to be a barren mound, and the "10,000 mu of fields, each producing 1,000 jin of paddy" turned out to be a place where frogs frolicked, visible to everyone. That was not all. In order to stave off a prefecture CPC Committee inspection, Xintian Production Brigade put to work more than 300 laborers and 180 head of draft animals simply to prepare rectangular fields but not sow seeds in them, creating large tracts of fine fields that lay uncultivated...

9 Rhapsody No 2

During the autumn of 1958, the mad upsurge in the large-scale smelting of steel also hit Fengyang City and the surrounding countryside. The county CPC Committee raised the slogan, "Every family tap potential, and everyone contribute iron and steel." Some communes made this slogan more vivid and specific: "Dig it from the soil, dredge it from the water, look for it outside; search for it inside to make a mound of scrap steel and old iron that rises like a tent." Acting under the slogan, "Give steel and iron no place to hide," county CPC Committee agencies scurried about opening up secure rooms and searching through safes and broke off iron columns at main entrances. Even people's bicycles, scissors, and cooking pots were scarcely able to escape. This is the way the large-scale smelting of steel was done, and this was also the way that the uncompensated indiscriminate transfer of work forces was done in the so-called formation of a "large corps to do combat." During the summer of 1960, the wheat fields of Hongguang Production Brigade in Mental Commune were a tract of golden grain waiting to be harvested. But on command from the county CPC Committee, more than 500 members of the work force were transferred to provide support to the distant Huangwan Production Brigade. The journey there took 2 days; there was 1 day of rest after arrival; another day was used looking for tools; harvesting was done for half a day; and another 2 days were needed to

hurry back. The entire journey would take a total of about a week going and coming. This "large corps doing combat" not only demolished the demarcation lines between production teams, abolished the calculation of workpoints on the basis of work done and distribution according to work, but also created very great pressures on the unit assisted. Chen Zhaoqiang [7115 3364 1144], a member of the Shanhe Production Brigade of Xiaoxihe Commune, sighed and said: "When the large corps arrived, we worried, and when it left we worried. When it arrived, we worried about not having enough firewood and that we might have to pull down our houses to get it. When it left, we worried that our own work force might also be transferred away, that we would lose our crops, and that our fields would be neglected..."

In just 1958 alone, the year when the tendency to effect the transition to communism began prematurely, a total of 63,399 mu of land, 11,450 houses, 2,414,000 jin of grain, 32,129 pieces of timber, 1,537 head of draft animals, 2,767 hogs and sheep, and 5,431 fowl throughout the province were indiscriminately transferred elsewhere, a payment of 7.32 million yuan being received, or 27.10 yuan per person. The methods whereby such egalitarian and indiscriminate transfers were made was cruel in the extreme. When done gently, people were forced to hand things over; when done harshly, people's homes were occupied, a family of more than 10 people possibly being forced into a single small room. When the county CPC Committee called for an "outfitting with wagons" within a few days and there was no lumber to built them, houses had to be dismantled for their timbers, forcing the peasants to camp out in the open along the streets. The tendency to effect the transition to communism prematurely carried away commune members' cooking pots. One old man knelt down and implored, "Leave one pot to boil water in..." Not only would the cadre not permit it, but he also smashed the iron pot to bits right before the old man's eyes...

10 The Coda to the Rhapsody

Large amounts of land left uncultivated. In 1959 a total of 310,695 mu of land lay uncultivated in Fengyang County. This was 21.41 percent of the total amount of cultivated land. In 1960, 537,976 mu of land lay uncultivated. This was 38.1 percent of the total amount of cultivated land, a sharp increase.

Large numbers of dead draft animals: In 1958, the county had 37,619 draft animals, but by 1961 the number had dwindled to 13,763, or 36.6 percent of the previous amount. Among those remaining, some lacked fodder and were in danger of dying.

Dramatic decline in the standard of living. In 1958, the county had 2,642 public mess halls in which 393,481 people from 86,360 households, or 97.9 percent of the total population, ate. In 1960, among the 421 mess halls having so-called "fairly good arrangements," 45,378 people had a grain ration of only 1 jin per day. 8,795

people got more than $\frac{1}{2}$ jin, and 701 people got less than $\frac{1}{2}$ jin. Among 53 mess halls having "fairly good arrangements," the grain ration was only 6 hong per day. As a result of both manmade and natural disasters, the shortage of grain and of funds worsened daily.

In December 1960, 6 jin of the 24.5 jin of rations that city and small-town residents received each month consisted of grain substitutes. Guo Jinshan [6753 6855 1472], a feeble old man who was unable to defecate after eating powdered sweet potato vines for several days, died an untimely death.

Nevertheless, the county CPC Committee turned a blind eye to the large-scale outflow of the population, the sickness, and the deaths. It reported to the prefecture CPC Committee, "enough to eat, and good food to eat," "one meal of solid food and two of gruel," and "two meals of solid food and one of gruel" each day.

The famine that shocked the entire nation began at this time, strangling the people of Fengyang.

Fear of Famine

11.4. *The Unbearably High Death Toll*

During 1959 and 1960, the population outflow from Fengyang County reached 11,196, or 3.3 percent of the total rural population, and the number of sick people reached 102,994, or 37.7 percent of the total rural population. Xiaoxihe Commune, with a population of 52,233, had 26,018 people fall ill. That was 49.8 percent of the population. At the Mentaizi Electrical Irrigation Station, 58 of the 60-woman civilian work corps suffered from amenorrhea. Throughout the county, there was malnutrition and physical emaciation. 17,482 people virtually lost their ability to work in the end.

The number of deaths was shocking. During 1959 and 1960, a total of 60,245 people, or 17.7 percent of the total rural population, died. In Wudian Commune, of a population of 53,759, 14,285 people, or 26.6 percent, died. In Xiaoxihe Commune, 14,072 people, or 26.9 percent of the commune's population, died. In Fanjing Production Brigade of Wudian Commune, of a population of 4,100, 1,627 people, or 39.7 percent, died. Xiahuang Hamlet in Damiao Commune, with a population of 70, had 48 deaths, or 68.6 percent. For the county as a whole, 2,404 households, or 3.4 percent of the total, perished. In 27 villages, death wiped out everybody. All 12 members of the family of Wang Huanye [3769 3562 2814], the principal of the county experimental primary school, perished. In the Beishan Production Team of Heping Production Brigade in Caoqian Commune, 30 of 34 members of commune member Cao Yile's [2580 1355 2867] family died. After commune member Cao Zexiang [2580 3419 4382] died, his body lay in the house for 6 days with no one carrying it away for burial, and his ears were eaten by rats. In Zhanzhuangzi Production Team of Cangtang Production Brigade in Xiaoxihe Commune, 2

days after Zhang Yupu's [1728 3768 3877] father died, he was still holding his daughter who had not yet died. Moreover, the figures were worse than this, because the number of deaths during 1961 had not yet been figured in.

The ghosts of those who unjustly died ascended to paradise anxiously and fearfully.

That the famine occurred during the second year of the founding of people's communes was truly a bitter irony! No wonder that during "recall past sufferings and think about present happiness" during the period of turmoil, many lower- and middle-class peasants here recalled 1960. It was not that they lacked feelings for the New China, but that this exceptionally great famine was truly shocking, and truly unprecedented in its severity!

During the 3 years of natural disaster, several million people died in Anhui Province!

This may be rated the most in China.

We have erected on the soil of the republic countless memorials to the valiant martyrs who have made sacrifices, but we have forgotten those who perished sadly because of the ultraleftist line. During Qingming Festival, a time of "copious rains and copious tears," we have presented countless flowers to the heroes and martyrs who helped save the country from danger, while omitting the good and simple boys and girls who perished.

Famine destroys kindheartedness, replacing it with savagery and madness. When the exceptionally great famine engulfed Fengyang, the cannibalism that occurred during the reign of the founder of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, broke out once again.

Yan Junmao [0917 0193 0379] of Xiaogang Production Team in Liyuan Township told me that "In 1960, there was a burial pit near our village in which many who had died of starvation were buried in shallow graves. Why were they buried in shallow graves? Because people were so starved they had no strength! They would just throw a few shovels full of dirt over them, and that was that. When I talk about it, I cannot face my ancestors or the souls of those who died unjust deaths. When people are extremely hungry, they are capable of anything. When a relative saw some people go to the grave pit and cut the calves from the legs of the dead to eat, she went too. At first, she was a little frightened, but later on she became used to it. She would go and return in the darkest hour of the night. I asked her, 'How could...' She sighed and said, 'I was extremely hungry.'"

12 B. Grain Extortion That Plunges People Into an Atmosphere of Mourning

In January 1961, the Fengyang County CPC Committee convened an enlarged meeting of level-5 cadres, which disclosed that the main person in charge of the previous CPC Committee had made serious errors in encouraging exaggeration and the "tendency to effect the transition to communism prematurely."

A representative of the Kaocheng Production Brigade, Wang Jialai [3769 1367 0171], said, "Our brigade formerly had a population of 5,000, now it has only 3,200. Even when the Japanese devils were here, we did not have this many deaths. We were still able to flee at that time, but, in 1960, we had no place to flee to. Four of my family of 6 died. I am the only one left of 12 people in the entire village to feed the oxen."

Guan Xueren [1351 1331 0088], a representative of Guanli Production Team, Jiangshan Production Brigade in Banqiao Commune said, "During the spring of 1960, there was nothing to eat in the village, and people died. I said to my wife, 'This is terrible!' My wife said, 'You must want to die, old man! If the cadres hear you, they will give you nothing to eat tomorrow, and starve you!' Then I did not dare speak either..."

Although the Fengyang County CPC Committee made this disclosure, faced with the hopeless situation of the Fengyang people's livelihood, it did not help the masses escape from their hardships; instead, it launched a large-scale so-called class struggle "against rightism," "against deception about output and sharing in private," and "against capitalism." In October 1959, the county CPC Committee convened a conference of cadres from the production team level and above in the beginning of a vicious campaign of grain extortion in which a cruel struggle raged throughout the entire county. Many communes and production brigades set up "grain inspection teams," and "grain inspection shock brigades," who overturned boxes, ransacked cabinets, dug up the ground, punched holes in walls, and conducted house-by-house searches. In Xiaowang Village in Banqiao Commune, with a total of 42 households, every household was searched. 14 people were strung up and beaten; and the grounds of 14 households were dug up in a search for grain. The "grain inspection shock unit" that Xiaoxihe Commune organized conducted an armed search of the Xiaoxihe Railroad Station in the dead of night, where they found grain, eggs, and onions belonging to staff members and workers, all of which they looted. When judicial authorities reported this situation to the principal person in charge of the county CPC Committee, he roared angrily, "Our grain searches are searches for capitalism. If you want a search warrant, I'll make one up for you!" As a result of the savagery and unreasonableness of the county CPC Committee, the "struggle to locate grain," which began in the summer of 1959, lasted until March 1960.

In the process of locating grain, 3,173 people in Xiaoxihe Commune suffered corporal punishment, 103 of them sustaining injuries.

Xiaoxihe Commune secretly established a labor reform corps at Randeng Reservoir, where it incarcerated people who had drifted into the area from elsewhere as well as cadres dismissed from their jobs. During the day, they sent militiamen to supervise their work; at night they handcuffed them and locked them in jail. If they died, no report was made, nor were their families notified. More than 30 of them died. When a production team leader of Fengxing Production Brigade in Zongpu Commune caught commune member Li Xingjun [2621 5281 0193] "stealing from the fields," he branded him on the mouth, his blood dripping everywhere. When the head of the Zhaozao Production Team in Yinjian Commune caught a young lad "stealing from the fields," he cut off four of his fingers. When the head of the Dongwan Production Team of Huafeng Production Brigade in Dongwan Commune caught a commune member "stealing from the fields," he pierced his ears with wire, tied his arms, and suspended him from a beam. When the head of Zhetiantang Production Brigade in Banqiao Commune caught a woman "stealing from the fields," he rammed a rifle into her vagina...

Such unbearably cruel and reprehensible facts aroused the intense indignation of the enlarged meeting of level-5 cadres. A bulletin on the meeting said that "the meeting was solemn and strained. More than 90 percent of those who spoke at the meeting were from families in which someone had died, and 100 percent of them wept when telling of the injustices done them. A feeling of extreme sadness pervaded the hall at their crying, particularly since most of the people there had lost someone. Most of the comrades wept several times with sorrow. Quite a few people did not have dry eyes from morning, when the telling of sorrow began, until 1900, when the meeting adjourned. The women, in particular, cried worst of all."

Even the CPC Committee principal person in charge admitted at the meeting that in making the inspections, "we were guilty..."

Was such evil limited only to Fengyang?

13 C. Those Who Dare Speak the Truth Are "Antiparty Elements"

Righteous members of the Communist Party exist. Faced with this horrifying tragedy, they courageously stepped forward to reveal the true facts about the great famine.

The Yinjian Commune CPC Committee secretary at the time, whose alias was Shi Qiuming [4258 3061 2494], risked death to write a letter to the CPC Central Committee.

This is what he wrote in the letter—

Central Committee and Chairman

I dispelled ideas of personal gain or loss, and made the gain or loss of the party and the people primary before making up my mind to report the great loss of life in Fengyang County last winter and this spring.

According to what I know, the loss of life in four hamlets of three communes was extremely shocking. In one, the loss of life was 5 percent, better than 11 percent in another, 15 percent in another, and more than 20 percent in another... during the most serious time, 5 or 6 people died daily in each village. Some villages have virtually no people. Some fled, others died. I personally witnessed approximately 300 to 400 children from our Linhuaiquan, approximately 100 of whom had died, who were gathered up after having been abandoned by adults.

Fengyang County magistrate Zhao Conghua [6392 1783 3478], 42 years old, went to work in 1942 and joined the party in the same year.

On 13 October 1959, the county CPC Committee wrote the following in the so-called "Zhao Conghua antiparty criminal data"—

1. Opposition to people's communes.

1. ...He believes people's communes were started too early and that the Central Committee should have run pilot projects. He said, "The Central Committee should have run pilot projects before operating people's communes in order to gain experience before promoting them. If they had, there would not have been so many problems..."

2. Opposition to collective ownership, advocacy of the contracting of production to individual households, and publicizing of enthusiasm for individual farming. He proposes distributing team land among commune members to farm by themselves, and the running of experiments...

3. Ordered the disbandment of mess halls.

4. Went everywhere to collect the tiniest shortcomings about the Great Leap Forward and the people's commune campaigns, which he publicized everywhere, and he also invented and fabricated facts to attack people's communes.

II. Opposition to the general line, opposition to the Great Leap Forward, and opposition to going in for the making of steel in a big way.

It is not difficult to imagine what consequences might ensue from such straightforward talk during the struggle "to oppose rightist opportunism" in the wake of the

Lushan Conference. Nevertheless, in the end, history would make an impartial judgment. With the passage of time, a distinctive glamour and brilliance was increasingly displayed.

"Responsibility Fields" Revived From the Dead

14 Misfortune always takes a turn for the better

The turn for the better was the contracting of production to individual households in which responsibility fields played the main role.

Between 1957 (i.e., during the second year of mass aversion to the advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives) and 1961 (i.e., in the fourth year of the establishment of people's communes) the contracting of production to individual households was done a total of three times in Anhui Province. Although it started out in a different way each time, it always had the same ending.

The first time was in 1957 when the peasants in some prefectures became increasingly dissatisfied with numerous problems that came to light in advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives. In one place after another in Anhui, agitation occurred for a retreat from cooperatives, and this was actually the first inkling of the contracting of production to individual households.

The second time was in 1959 when collective economic strength was not up to dealing with the natural disasters that had just occurred, and some areas tried "delegation of land" and "assignment of fields to individual households," which was actually a continuation of the contracting of production to individual households.

The third time was the spring of 1961 when the provincial CPC Committee first secretary at that time, Zeng Xisheng [2582 1585 5110], personally commanded a pilot project for the promotion of a "field management responsibility system with rewards," or "responsibility fields" at the Nanxinzhuang Production Team in Jinggang Production Brigade of Dashushan Commune in the suburbs of Hefei. This spread very quickly to more than 80 percent of production teams in the province, which was a high tide for the contracting of production to individual households and had the greatest effect and covered the widest area in all China at that time.

This is the trilogy of the contracting of production to individual households! Although each one lasted only an extremely short time, they provided the people of Anhui a difficult-to-come-by opportunity for rest and rehabilitation, and they were the earliest turning points for the rise of rural reforms in China in 1978.

15 It is an extremely miraculous story. The advent of responsibility fields in Anhui during 1961 began with a suggestion from a peasant.

In Wangzhuang Production Team, Miaoguang Production Brigade of Chulan Commune in Su County lived a 73-year-old peasant named Liu Qinglan [0491 7230 5695], whose son was unable to work because of tuberculosis. Seeing how needy he was, people urged him to go to an old folks home to live out his late years in peace.

But this stubborn old peasant declined their advice and made a request to the commune CPC Committee: "I do not want to eat public assistance grain; I would rather use my own strength to work. If you agree, I will go into the mountains, taking my son with me so I can both look after him and farm. I will turn over all surplus production to the state, and I will not want the state to be responsible for any shortage."

The commune CPC Committee approved his request.

Thereupon, father and son headed for the bosom of the vast mountains, where the verdant hills and the misty ranges became their home.

History bestowed on them the authority to innovate. They had no ox. All they had was one shovel and one four-prong hook, which they used to clear 16 mu of wilderness from which they harvested 3,300 jin of grain in the fall. After keeping 1,300 jin for their own rations, seeds, and livestock feed, they turned over to the commune 1,800 jin of grain and 60 yuan obtained from hog raising. The commune CPC Committee was astonished.

The old peasant suggested, "The best thing to do is to contract fields to commune members for farming and carry out unified distribution. Otherwise, quite a few commune members will simply work as little as possible with no sense of responsibility, and production will not be very good!"

His idea made the commune leaders suddenly see the light.

No one could have imagined that this ordinary story would set in motion a spring thunder of revival...

16 In February 1961, Comrade Zeng Xisheng, who was formerly first secretary in both the Anhui and Shandong Provincial CPC Committees, stopped in Bengbu to learn about the situation there from a member of the provincial standing committee. Upon hearing about this old peasant, he was greatly moved.

Actually, the idea of having "responsibility fields" had sprouted earlier, after large numbers of the rural population had died.

On 28 August 1960, when the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee convened a meeting of cadres at the county level and above, Comrade Zeng Xisheng suggested the "contracting of production to teams." He made this scheme a part of the 10 specific policies for the administration and management of people's communes, the formulation of which he had personally sponsored, and he publicized them in the name of the provincial government.

This action played a certain positive role in revival of the production order. Nevertheless, the problems of doing work "helter-skelter" and egalitarian distribution that the peasants detested most had not yet been completely solved.

At a regional secretaries' conference that the Central Committee convened in the fall of 1960, Comrade Zeng Xisheng heard Comrade Mao Zedong say that "during the period of the advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives, the contracting of work to individual households may be instituted in field management work." He then systematically summarized problems, including the lack of clear-cut responsibility for contracting work and contracting output, the lack of concern for quality, the serious problems of waiting for work, layoffs, dilly-dallying at work, and caring only about private plots, but not caring about production from the fields. He repeatedly turned these matters over in his mind, discussed and studied them, and finally designed a responsibility system that was directly linked to commune members' material benefits as follows: Contracting cultivated land on the basis of the basic number of work force units in a commune member's household and recording work points on the basis of actual output: the higher the output, the greater the number of work points, and the greater the earnings. This was "responsibility fields" in embryonic form.

Now when Comrade Zeng Xisheng heard in Bengbu the story of the old peasant from Su County, it excited a strong and vivid sympathetic response in him. At a subsequent meeting of prefecture, city, and county CPC Committee first secretaries, he couldn't help but praise the old peasant: "And who was the first to propose this matter? It was an old man from Su County... Was this person one who followed the socialist line, or did he follow the line of going it alone? I believe this person followed the socialist road. Why is that? Because he produced 3,300 jin of grain and turned 1,800 jin of it over to the collective. How is that for a collective concept?... This is a high order of communist spirit. I'm afraid there are no people like this in our house as yet..."

17 On the morning of 24 February, Comrade Zeng Xisheng returned to Hefei, where, at a meeting of the secretariat that same afternoon, he proposed a responsibility system assigning output to individual households. Although the secretariat supported this measure, it felt the risks were too great. Following the meeting, it made a report to the first secretary of the East China Bureau from which it received the instruction: "Do not promote this measure. Let each county run a representative experiment first!"

Very shortly, a comrade in charge at the East China Bureau arrived in Anhui. While resting at Guhe Town in Quanla County on the way, he had a conversation with several old peasants. The old peasants said, "The best thing is to contract fields to us to farm. We guarantee to farm them well! Why don't you believe us?"

When the comrade in charge at the East China Bureau reached Hefei, he told Comrade Zeng Xisheng about this request.

The time was ripe!

During the last 10 days of February 1961, Comrade Zeng Xisheng headed a work team that paid a personal visit to a pilot project at Nanxinzhuang Production Team.

On 6 March 1961, the provincial CPC Committee secretariat discussed data from the pilot project at Nanxinzhuang.

On 7 March, Comrade Zeng Xisheng went to Guangzhou to take part in a Central Committee work conference. The report he made to the east China team aroused controversy. Inasmuch as some people said this was "organized individual farming," "peasant payment of rent to the state," and appeared to be a return to the land reform era when fields were divided among peasants, Comrade Zeng Xisheng made a report of this plan's advantages and shortcomings to Mao Zedong.

Mao Zedong said, "Try it out! If you make a go of it, and it can increase output by 100 million jin of grain, that will be important!"

Zeng Xisheng had a secretary relay Mao Zedong's reply to the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee at once. The provincial CPC Committee immediately sent a letter to prefecture, city, and county CPC Committee first secretaries to have them promote "responsibility fields."

Immediately, the spark at Nanxinzhuang ignited a prairie fire in far-flung rural villages throughout the province.

18 However, within several days, at a conference in Guangzhou, Comrade Mao Zedong had a responsible comrade from the east China region relay the following to Zeng Xisheng: "Responsibility fields may be tried out on a small scale." Since the sense of Comrade Mao Zedong's instructions differed from what he had originally said, and limited the scale of trials, Comrade Zeng Xisheng wrote a letter to Comrade Mao Zedong in which he explained in detail the active role of "responsibility fields." He also pointed out several shortcomings of the plan.

Comrade Mao Zedong said nothing more on the subject.

Nevertheless, the raging flames of the "responsibility fields" were already burning, and there was no way to stop them. In Anhui Province, 39.2 percent of production teams quickly instituted "responsibility fields," and they continued to develop and expand.

19 Anhui Province's "responsibility fields" stirred up a widespread social debate. In provinces neighboring Anhui, people vigorously discussed the issue of whether "responsibility fields" were consistent with the overall orientation of socialism.

As a result, the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee wrote the "Report on the Trial Implementation of the Work Contracting and Production Contracting Responsibility System" to the Central Committee, explaining that the "responsibility fields" were synonymous with the "institution of a rigorous field-management responsibility system" and with the assignment of some responsibility to teams, as well as the assignment of some responsibility to individuals spoken about in the 60 articles. It requested that the Central Committee inform neighboring provinces about these measures in order to avoid public misunderstanding.

In order to gain Comrade Mao Zedong's support for the smooth promotion of "responsibility fields," Zeng Xisheng made another report to Mao Zedong at Bengbu in July 1961.

Comrade Zeng Xisheng talked for more than an hour with Comrade Mao Zedong on a train.

Mao Zedong: How did the conference go?

Zeng Xisheng: This conference was about rectification, mostly the provincial CPC Committee and prefectoral CPC Committees conducting examinations.

Mao Zedong: What did they examine?

Zeng Xisheng: The comrades in our provincial CPC Committee secretariat were all examined very thoroughly. Our provincial CPC Committee has two problems of an erroneous orientation: One is treating reduced output as increased output, and the second is treating "leftist" tendencies in rural villages and rightist counter...

Mao Zedong: The Lushan Conference started out being antileftist. Later, after Peng Dehuai got going, the original plan was thrown into confusion!

Zeng Xisheng: Our provincial CPC Committee has not acted in a gentle and mild way as the Central Committee instructed. It has been one-sided and has been insensitive about very many matters. One example is the seriously abnormal number of deaths, which it always regards as individual issues, not giving it serious attention. It is dizzy with success, seriously subjective and bureaucratic, and it has a weak mass point of view.

Mao Zedong: It had better accept the lessons of experience!

Zeng Xisheng: This conference was a turning point for Anhui.

Mao Zedong: If matters can be turned around, that is fine!

Zeng Xisheng: The greatest problem in production this year is disasters!

Mao Zedong: Right. Heaven does not help! Henan, Huber, Sichuan, and Shandong have all had disasters, and grain is in very short supply. What's the status of your outshipments?

Zeng Xisheng: Outshipment of 200 million jin will be difficult.

Mao Zedong: How about ensuring enough for yourselves?

Zeng Xisheng: There will be shortages. More melons and vegetables will have to be grown.

Mao Zedong: All of you take the lead in the examination, and the county CPC Committee secretaries should do a good job of examining too. This is the key. When higher levels act, unless counties act too, problems cannot be solved.

Zeng Xisheng: Numerous county CPC Committee comrades have a good attitude. They have said that they are willing to return to a lower level to straighten things out, but a small number of people become quarrelsome when they see that the provincial CPC Committee and prefecture CPC Committees are conducting an examination, as though they are free from errors...

Mao Zedong: Do self-criticism! Do self-criticism until people no longer want to hear it. Do individual comrades among county CPC Committee secretaries take the lead in self-criticism at meetings? The crucial issue at level-3 cadre conferences is with counties. If the county CPC Committees do not act, the lower levels will either not initiate action or they will not be revealing....

Zeng Xisheng: ...

Mao Zedong: One article in the 60 articles is not right and will have to be revised, and that is the "three fixes and one reward" issue. The "system of three fixed targets and one reward" in the Hubei report is false. They did not implement it at all, and their contracting of work and contracting of output was also done helter-skelter. One county did a good job even though it did not go in for the "three fixes and one reward." It did large-scale contracting...

Zeng Xisheng: Under the old system of contracting output, only the team leader cared about output; the commune members cared only about their own work

points. Under the present system (meaning responsibility fields), it's not just the team leader who cares about output, every commune member cares about it. The system's shortcomings are: 1) There can be considerable favoritism, and 2) As population fluctuates, adjustments to responsibility fields will have to be made. The masses say that not only is there favoritism in the contracting of responsibility fields, but also in the calculation of work points on the basis of work done. There used to be a vying for work points when they were calculated on the basis of work done, but now the emphasis is on the fields. This kind of favoritism is better than the other kind of favoritism; this kind of favoritism boosts output.

Mao Zedong: Whenever you people feel there are no defects, you can promote the system everywhere!

Zeng Xisheng: (Nods head)...

Mao Zedong: How long will this conference go on?

Zeng Xisheng: Another 3 days!

Mao Zedong: You won't end it until there is self-examination, and there are still numerous documents to be discussed. Do you think 3 days is long enough? You will have to spend at least 2 days discussing production problems, and you'll especially want to lay out next year's production instead of making temporary arrangements. Just when will you be able to recover to the 1957 level?

Zeng Xisheng: Everyone is ready to produce, but there are fairly numerous problems in restoring grain output to the 1957 level. Cash crops are no problem. We have already decided to loan land to the masses to grow oil-bearing crops. Each household is to be loaned 2 fen (13 1/3 square meters) of land on which sesame is now being grown, and on which rape can be grown later.

Mao Zedong: This is a good plan. Five percent for private plots is not enough. Land for private plots should be somewhat more; you don't want to starve people to death!

Zeng Xisheng: We are ready to fix the amount of private plots at 5 percent, and then loan a little land to the masses each year up to an estimated 7 or 8 percent...

Mao Zedong: Would 10 percent be possible?...

After seeing Comrade Mao Zedong off, Zeng Xisheng immediately relayed the gist of his talk with Comrade Mao Zedong, and said sternly: "People will be held responsible if any mistakes are made, but fixing responsibility does not solve problems. Some comrades make fairly serious mistakes and have to be helped, but one also has to make allowances for people's difficulties. Right now the problems to be tackled are, first, unity is

needed within the party, and second, morale must be aroused. When problems appear, everyone should take responsibility; we're all in the same boat..."

From this time on, the pace of the Anhui CPC Committee's promotion of the "responsibility field" production responsibility system quickened greatly.

By mid-August, the number of production teams that had instituted "responsibility fields" in the province had suddenly grown to 74.8 percent.

By mid-October, another sharp increase to 84.4 percent occurred.

Rectifying the "Responsibility Fields"

20 In December 1961 a dramatic change occurred in the situation. Comrade Mao Zedong sought out Zeng Xisheng at Wuxi in Jiangsu Province and said: "Production has begun to revive, shouldn't this plan (meaning responsibility fields) be changed?" Comrade Mao Zedong's attitude toward supporting the "responsibility fields" had changed 180 degrees.

Comrade Zeng Xisheng tried to hold fast and said, "The masses have just begun to taste the benefits, can't it go on for a while longer?"

Mao Zedong did not reply one way or the other.

The Anhui Provincial CPC Committee supported the "responsibility fields" plan, and decided to continue to promote them in 1962. On 3 February of that year it convened a meeting of secretaries of all prefecture, city, and county CPC Committees, and comrades in charge of units under direct provincial supervision to plan conscientiously.

Not long afterward, misfortune loomed again!

The CPC Central Committee convened an enlarged work conference (a 7,000-man conference) in Beijing. At the conclusion of the conference, the Central Committee detained the delegates from Anhui to make some disclosures to them. It seriously criticized Comrade Zeng Xisheng for the highhanded way he suppressed democracy, and it condemned the "responsibility fields" as "having been promoted without first running experiments," and for also making the full operation of the "five unifications" very difficult.

The CPC Central Committee decided to transfer Comrade Zeng Xisheng out of Anhui, and to reorganize the Anhui CPC Central Committee.

A meeting of the provincial CPC committee criticized and investigated Wang Guangyu [3769 0342 1316], and others who had previously actively promoted the "responsibility fields." At a 4 March meeting of the

provincial CPC Standing Committee, the provincial CPC Committee decided to "rectify the responsibility fields," the rectification to be completed before the end of 1962.

The CPC Central Committee held the 10th Plenary Session of the 8th Party Central Committee from 24 through 27 September 1962, at which Comrade Mao Zedong issued the slogan, "never forget class struggle," and Anhui Province's "responsibility fields" were once again criticized as a "tendency toward going it alone" in the "restoration of capitalism."

Because he had once again recommended "responsibility fields" at a Central Committee work conference at Beidaihe, Comrade Deng Zihui [6772 1311 1863] was not only not excused by Comrade Mao Zedong, but was also seriously criticized. Nevertheless, Comrade Deng Zihui finally reiterated: "I still feel the same way about responsibility fields now!" As a result, at the 10th Plenary Session, Comrade Deng Zihui's position on the CPC Central Committee Rural Work Department, as well as his position as minister of a ministry by the same name, were abolished.

Twenty-four years later, Comrade Zhang Qirui [1728 0366 3843], who was by now blind in both eyes, revealed the true facts of the matter from his personal experience in an article titled, "Reminiscences About Two Investigations of Anhui's Responsibility Fields," which was published in a trial issue of *Historical Data About China's Agricultural Cooperatives*. He wrote:

During May (1962), at the suggestion of the revered Deng, Comrade Wang Guanlan [3769 6034 3482], deputy minister of the Central Rural Work Ministry, took me along on an investigation of "responsibility fields" in Anhui Province that had been instituted prematurely and about which there was no unanimity of opinion. We selected for our investigation "responsibility fields" in Dangtu County that had been instituted the previous year in which mostly paddy was grown and where the harvest came somewhat early. Results of the investigation showed increased yields and an increased harvest for the previous year, and another general increase in yields for the early paddy crop in the current year. I also summarized numerous advantages from the institution of these "five unified" responsibility fields in which work and production were contracted to individual households. Upon returning to Beijing and making a report to the revered Deng, a report was written bearing my name.

Around the end of June, the revered Deng took me to a conference at Zhongnanhai. When the conference was about over, Comrade Tan Zhenlin [6223 7201 2651] said to the revered Deng: "No discussion today of the problem you wanted to talk about. Let's talk about it later!" Several days later, I asked the revered Deng: "Just what is going on with the responsibility fields?" The revered Deng said, "I reported to Chairman Mao,

and the chairman disagrees. I still have to convince Chairman Mao to adopt this method!" On 27 June, I led an investigation team to the Fuliji District of Suxian County. All the comrades on the district CPC Committee in this district had written letters to Chairman Mao describing the advantages of instituting "responsibility fields." The Prefecture CPC Committee secretary also approved. Suxian County grew mostly corn and sorghum. The outcome of the investigation was the same as it had been in Dangtu County, an increase in yields and an increased harvest in the previous year, with the prospect of a bumper harvest during the current year inasmuch as the crops were growing very well. The masses were universally satisfied.

Following the 10th Plenary Session of the 8th Party Central Committee in October, our department head told me, "you should prepare yourself ideologically. The revered Deng proposes criticism of the 'contracting of production to individual households.' Since you have conducted this kind of investigation, you should prepare to investigate." Thus, I repeatedly went over the investigation reports I had written to prepare for an investigation. But after a very long period of time, I was not allowed to conduct any investigation. Only later on did I learn that the revered Deng had assumed full responsibility...

Between 12 October and 12 November, the reorganized Anhui Provincial CPC Committee convened its 13th session at which it relayed the spirit of the 10th Plenary Session of the 8th Central Committee, emphasizing that "this session opposes the 'trend toward going it alone,' 'the trend toward all blackness,' and the 'trend to reverse verdicts.'" The 10th Plenary Session criticized the 'trend toward going it alone' as represented by Deng Zihui. Comrade Deng Zihui made a self-criticism, and Comrade Zeng Xisheng also made a self-criticism." "The clamor to go it alone exists in the central government, as well as in provinces, prefectures, counties, and communes. The trend toward going it alone is great, but the number of people involved is small, no more than a few percent, the largest number in the country being in Anhui alone where the 'trend toward going it alone,' in particular, is most severe."

The meeting also passed the "Resolution on Resolute Implementation of the Central Committee 'Resolution on Further Consolidation of the People's Commune Collective Economy, and Development of Agricultural Production.'" It pointed out that "this decision is of special significance for Anhui. It provides us a powerful weapon for the smooth rectification of the responsibility fields, consolidates the people's commune collective economy, and relatively quickly restores and develops production."

Following the meeting, the entire province was divided into three parts for the running of "training classes to rectify responsibility fields," with more than 10,000

prefecture and commune cadres participating. After finishing their studies, they served as key cadres for the organization of work teams who went off to rural cadres amidst great fanfare to "rectify responsibility fields." The provincial CPC committee demanded "the rectification of a number of production teams before spring plowing in 1963, the remainder to be rectified before spring plowing in 1964."

A rural transformation filled with vitality that might have rescued the peasants from dire straits was thus forfeited.

Which Way Out

21 The struggle to "rectify the responsibility fields" was fairly arduous and long lasting. Beginning in 1963, China's rural villages first launched the so-called "socialist education campaign" (the four clean-ups). Comrade Mao Zedong also put forward the "prevention of peaceful evolution," "prevention of a capitalist restoration," and prevention of "emphasis on the power-holding capitalist roader faction in the party's rectification." The fires of turmoil burned straight up toward the top level in a prelude to the protracted 10 years of turmoil.

"Responsibility fields" continued to be criticized as a "trend toward going it alone." All Anhui from top to bottom, from the leaders to the grassroots, and from cadres to the masses, several hundred thousand people in all, became embroiled in a miserable struggle because of the "responsibility fields," and the "responsibility fields" were "completely rectified" in the process.

By 1978, the good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He, naturally endowed with beauty and glorified by the birth of people of ability, once again became a source of beggars and filth and a dead land producing famine and destitution.

The use of numbers to recall the miserable time in 1978 may be dull and dry, but it is just such dull and dry numbers that can evidence the profound suffering that literature portrays.

Grain—

In the fall of 1957, Anhui Province's gross output of grain reached 20.5 billion jin, or 616 jin per capita. In the fall of 1978, Anhui Province's gross output of grain was only 29.6 billion jin, or 629 jin per capita. This is to say the annual per capita increase was only 0.66 jin over a period of 21 years. In the fall of 1957, each member of the work force throughout the province produced 1,542 jin of grain. In the fall of 1978, each member of the workforce throughout the province produced 1,812 jin of grain. This means an annual increase of only 0.8 percent over a period of 21 years. According to *History of the [Earlier] Han Dynasty: Food and Currency*, during the Dingsheng period of the Han Dynasty 2,000 years ago, in

normal years grain output per capita of the work force was 2,000 jin, or as high as 2,700 jin or low as 1,700 jin. This means that grain output per capita of the work force was higher 2,000 years ago than it was in 1978.

Per Capita Income—

In 1955, per capita earnings in Anhui Province averaged 60 yuan. By 1978, they had increased to only 66 yuan, meaning that in a 23-year period, they increased by only an astonishing 6 yuan, or 0.26 yuan per person per year. If adjusted for changes in the value of the currency, the peasants' actual living standard in 1978 was vastly lower than in 1955.

The Collective Economy—

Take Jiashan County as an example: From 1955 to the end of 1978, the "three levels of ownership" in the whole county had fixed assets with a total value of 25.02 million yuan. However, commune and brigade loans amounted to 16.13 million yuan (an exemption from payment of 2.03 million yuan not included), the fixed assets and the loans canceled each other out, with only 8.9 million in wealth remaining. If annual uncompensated state assistance and various kinds of relief funds provided are deducted, the province was 95,000 yuan in debt to the state.

In 1978, 25 percent of the province's production teams found the maintenance of simple reproduction difficult. Even though 8 percent of the production teams sold off their plow oxen, farm implements, and houses, their debts were still as high as a mountain.

22 From the time that the Communist Party of China came to power in China until 1978, Anhui Province had five provincial CPC Committee first secretaries, none of them lacking noble ideals, and none of them lacking intelligence or virtue. Deep-thinking, deeply concerned, inquiring, and fighting people all, yet the result was but the exhaustion of their talents, everything remaining unchanged.

What is the way out for China's rural villages?

In a quest for a way out, we have performed many different experiments on China's dear and lovable elders and brethren:

"Large in size and collective in nature" [the people's communes];

"The Great Leap Forward";

"Taking Class Struggle as the Key Link";

"Learning From Dazhai"...

All these things failed in the end. The sky is oh so high, and the road is oh so long; In this boundless land, can no road be opened that offers a choice?

23 The Chinese peasants have lived through too profound and too heavy suffering and too strong and too intense yearnings have also been stirred in them.

The "responsibility fields" came to a premature end. But their premature end did not mean that they could be forgotten; a loss does not mean one can obliterate the thing lost. The "responsibility fields" were like extremely strong seeds of the life force carried in the bottom of people's hearts, awaiting, in the hard and frozen ground, the arrival of the spring breezes and the spring rains, and awaiting the time when they might grow into a bumper harvest. They were not only just surviving, they were also seeking an opportunity in the extremely cold and inhospitable soil to show the power of life...

24 Following the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, as though discovering a new continent, millions upon millions of people suddenly surged deep into the mountains of Hubei, Hunan, and Anhui in a quest for a relic of history. This was Jinqiao Village in the Shuangqiao District of Jinzhai County where the mountains are high and the rulers of the land are far away. People called it a "forgotten corner."

Jinqiao was truly an out-of-the-way and remote location. It lay 70 li to the northwest of the county seat at an average elevation above sea level of 300 meters. The entire village consisted of 12 production teams, a population of 1,714 in 329 households, a work force of 944, and a land area totaling 9,676 mu, of which only 355 mu, or 0.2 mu per person, was cultivated. Forests covered 6,918 mu, 4 mu per person. This was an economically diversified mountain village in which forestry dominated. As a result of repeated destruction of forestry resources, there was serious soil erosion, sparse plant cover, and sandy soil of low fertility. "When baldness reigns in the mountains, sadness reigns there too; a song in mourning about the growing of grain is carried on the running waters."

Thanks to the news stoppage, it was not until 1962, the year of the criticism of the "responsibility fields," that the revival of "responsibility fields" finally reached this remote mountain village. Except for the slightly more than 700 mu of remaining forest lands, which were under centralized collective administration, for all the rest of the mountain forests, "contracting of production to individual households" was instituted. This tiny mountain village took a new lease on life. Since a long journey was required to get to it, people rarely came. As a result, another 12 years passed without anyone outside the mountains knowing that the "contracting of production to individual households" was still being practiced here. Jinqiao Village had been forgotten by the "large in size

and collective in nature" people's communes. The young forests matured to form a thick overhead canopy. Some trees were so big around a person could not circle them with his arms!

Lovely trees!

Desirable trees...

But, the news finally leaked outside the mountains.

"Still contracting production to individual households!"

"That's the limit!"

Jinzhai County is shocked from top to bottom!

Disaster is about to strike!

In 1974, a "political line educational work team" composed of cadres from the county, the district, and people's communes started to enter Jinqiao Village in all their mightiness and with blood in their eyes.

The village leaders faced a grim choice. There was clearly no way to resist the pressures exerted on them, but neither could they bear to allow the verdant mountains to be made bald, cutting off the commune members' way of earning a living. After cudgeling their brains for ideas, a way to slip out of their predicament occurred to them: Carry out humiliating self-criticism.

Show false contrition.

Hide the truth from the work team.

Put up sheds in the collectively operated mountain forests for control.

In the privately contracted mountain forests, exchange labor to cut firewood.

Cut down more than 500 old walnut trees...

When the work team really believed that the "contracting of production to individual households" had been felled, it went off satisfied. After it pulled out, everything returned to the way it had been, and the village was able to practice "contracting of output to individual households" as before.

The mountain forests grew freely in the land once again.

There were the green and luxuriant pines and cedars; the red flowers and the green trees; and many kinds of birds chirping in the spring. Even visitors wondered about whether to enter this magical fairyland, and they became intoxicated by the natural influences—This corner forgotten by history, created a marvel that history will always remember!

25 I said, with regret, to office director Xin Sheng [6580 3932] in the research and investigation office of the Anhui Provincial Rural Economic Committee located along Chang Jiang Road in Hefei: "It's really too bad that I didn't go to see Jinqiao this time in Anhui..."

"It's impossible to go!"

"Don't they like visitors?"

"No, it's too far!"

"It's possible to go no matter how far..."

"Going and coming would take at least 10 days..."

"So far?"

I didn't know what to say, and I laughed.

A mountain forest with a canopy covering it floated through my mind. It gazed at me like two bright eyes.

Ah! Jinqiao!

Is it simply because of a lack of transportation that outsiders find it so difficult to patronize you? No, you stubbornly testify to whether the "responsibility fields" in Anhui during 1961 were a success or a failure. You are singing out a lusty song of the vast mountains!

So it was that during 1978 when Anhui was oppressed by a once-in-a-hundred-years great drought, and the children of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He were facing life or death, survival or destruction, that the "contracting of production to individual households" once again appeared and rippled throughout the country. Melons ripened and fruit dropped, the time when water flowed through irrigation channels was at hand...

Chapter 3. A Choice Made Against the Will—The Six Articles of the Provincial CPC Committee: Breakthrough in Getting Out of a Predicament

Better To Lend It to the Peasants Than Let It Lie Fallow

1 The catastrophic and eventful autumn of 1978 brought with it a sense of the fright and the threat of death of 1961, posing a sharp challenge to the wailing good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai, and to the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee.

The first of September was a life-or-death day. An emergency meeting was being held in the Standing Committee conference room in the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee compound. The subject of the meeting was both simple and serious, how to get through the worst drought in 100 years.

Obviously, the tremendous decline in grain production in Anhui Province during the autumn of 1978 would be difficult to reverse. The drought continued to spread mercilessly, and disaster continued to worsen. Now was the season of the autumn harvest and fall planting that could brook no delay. Unless decisive action were taken, large tracts of land would be allowed to lie uncultivated, and next year there would be no harvest of early and summer season crops.

How to get out of the predicament?

Not only are rural cadres worried, but the provincial CPC committee is also heavyhearted, and caught in the dilemma of being on a "single-plank bridge" on which it is impossible to go either forward or backward...

2 Chairing the meeting was the newly arrived first secretary of the Provincial CPC Committee who had just come to Anhui a year and half earlier to take up his duties, Wang Li [8001 6849]. Born into a peasant village in Dongping County, Shandong Province, he joined the CPC in May 1936, attended a teacher's college, and served as a secretary of both a county and a prefecture CPC Committee. He had a profound love of the land and deep feeling for the common people.

During the 10 years of turmoil, Wan Li's most notable service was during the period of restructuring in 1975 under the sponsorship of Deng Xiaoping. At that time, he was Minister of Railways. He creatively formulated a body of new policies that turned around the chaotic situation existing in railroad transportation, thereby earning praise in the phrase "a safe and on time 10,000-mile trip," [10,000 miles being an alternative meaning of Wan Li's name]. Nevertheless, in 1976, with the arrival of the campaign to "thoroughly criticize Deng and counterattack the right deviationist attempt to reverse correct verdicts," he came under ferocious attack, was removed from office, stripped of his duties, and brutally persecuted. He developed serious vasculitis in one leg, his left lower leg becoming 1 cun thicker than his right leg, necessitating a long stay in the hospital. The problem has not been completely cured to this day. Eight months following the smashing of the gang of four, in June 1977, the Politburo of the CPC Central Committee convened an important conference on solutions to problems in Anhui, and Wan Li was sent to Anhui Province to take over the position of first secretary of the provincial CPC Committee. Since that time, his destiny has been closely bound up with the good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He.

Wan Li, who received his orders during a time of hardship, had a mission to perform that was both lofty and daunting.

Despite the doctor's repeated "warnings" to him about not getting overly tired, he set off on a 3,000-li inspection trip, dragging an injured leg that might have to be given bed rest at any time. Within the short period of 3

months, he visited counties, cities, mining and industrial sites, and rural villages in more than 10 prefectures in Anhui. He discovered that, although the industrial situation in cities was bleak, public order bad, and goods in short supply, because it is an agricultural province and because it was a serious disaster area during the 10 years of turmoil, problems in Anhui's villages were far graver than in the cities. He knew just how worried a peasant could be with no grain in his hands; he knew just how miserable were the beggars who begged along the streets; and he knew how a family of the old and the young curled up against the cold in impoverished shacks.

Most shocking for Wan Li was his visit to Jinzhai.

His vehicle traveled deep into the mountain region where Banzhuyuan Commune and Yanzihe Commune meet. There, in a peasant's home, he saw an old man and two young girls squatting at the opening of a cook stove. Wan Li greeted the old man warmly.

"Uncle!"

The old man did not move.

"Uncle..."

The old man still did not move.

Wan Li was very puzzled.

An accompanying person told the old man that this was the newly arrived first secretary of the provincial CPC Committee, and only then did the old man slowly rise to his feet. It was then that Wan Li was dumbfounded at discovering that the old man was wearing no pants: the bottom half of his body was bare.

He then greeted the two young girls, but the girls did not want to move half a step. The villagers said, "Don't call out to them; they don't have any pants either. The weather is too cold, so they sit at the opening to the cook stove to get warm!"

Tears filled Wan Li's eyes and rolled down his face.

That day, Wan Li ate no lunch. Sighing with profound feeling, he said, "Our revolution is this many years old, and yet the old man is so poor he has no pants to wear..."

3 Back on 4 February, when the first hints of the great drought appeared, Wan Li said something simple yet profound when talking about agricultural production. At a time when the slogan "take class struggle as the key link" was still very much in evidence, he had the courage to raise the slogan "take agriculture as the center" in view of the realities of agricultural production in Anhui.

He said...

"...Agricultural production has its fixed characteristics and laws... agricultural production must be consciously made the central task; all other tasks will have to take a back seat to agricultural production. Anything that helps production is to be done, and all the so-called work tasks that get in the way of production are to be changed. Whoever delays the farming season commits a new mistake..."

On 12 July, when the great drought was already seriously threatening Anhui, Wan Li once again sounded the tocsin from the historical heights.

He said...

"...Anhui has been famous over the years for exaggeration, for making false reports, and for the egalitarian and indiscriminate transfer of resources, and the lessons this has brought are tragic ones. The cruel requisition purchases of grain from the peasants have caused hunger. History has shown that whoever transfers resources in an indiscriminate and egalitarian way, deprives the peasants, or treats the peasants like slaves is bound to be toppled! Therefore, the summarization of positive and negative lessons of experience is more precious than anything. If the enthusiasm of the millions of peasants can be aroused, there is great hope for Anhui..."

An entirely new change in thinking entered the decision-making hub of the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee.

This was not merely mental preparation to do battle against the great drought, but also mental preparation against the challenges of ultraleftist rural policies.

As the result of sorrowful experiences during the years of turmoil, we came to understand the apathy of the peasantry and the need for a genuine revival of the position of the peasants as masters of the land, as well as respect for the rights of peasants to make decisions. This made it possible to revive hope out of despair, to break the predicament of Anhui's rural villages, and infuse new vitality into them, as well as to face daunting, even risky undertakings.

Since the peasants do not believe empty promises, only the abundance of the good earth can be a standard for judging rights or wrongs in history.

4 Arousal of the peasants' enthusiasm was crucial to getting through the worst drought in 100 years.

But how to arouse it? The Anhui Provincial CPC Committee was under pressure from all sides: Certainly, "pell-mell" action would obviously not be effective, and might push Anhui deeper into disaster. Unless the peasants were given authority to make decisions about farming, any thought of halting the outward flow of population was categorically impossible. However, to allow the

peasants even the slightest authority over the land would be bound to cause a slide toward contracting of production to individual households, and this was something that official documents did not permit. As a first-level organization, the provincial CPC Committee might even be condemned for violations of party spirit principles.

Party spirit and people's spirit conflicted irreconcilably at this point.

At the 1 September emergency meeting, Wan Li spoke with fervor: "All that is possible must be done to fight the drought. If one more jin can be harvested, one more jin should be harvested, and if one more liang can be harvested, one more liang should be harvested. Unless the harvest can be secured, all else is empty babble! The peasants are very poor and have no money at all. They cannot even afford to buy back the grain that the state provides. How can this go on! We cannot watch the cultivation of large tracts of land to be abandoned right before our eyes. At that rate, life will be even more difficult next year. It is better to lend some of it to the peasants than let it lie fallow..."

It was at this meeting that the provincial CPC Committee made a major policy decision that took account of the desires of both superior authorities and those under its jurisdiction and that neither violated party spirit nor caused peasants to despair: It lent each peasant 3 fen of land on which to grow vegetables, it provided for no requisition purchases of wheat sown on drylands, and those who planted oil-bearing crops on barren hills and lake beaches could harvest them for themselves...

The single word "lend" carried exceptional weight!

This was the ingenious creation of the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee.

Possibly the subtlety of the situation lay in the following: The peasants, coerced by policies that provided no alternatives to get through the drought, and tied down to the point of numbness by the ultraleftist line, could wiggle a little for the first time in a long time. Like a bolt out of the blue, a storm of reform of China's rural villages appeared magically.

Birth of the Provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles

5 The decision to "lend land to the peasants" did not sprout overnight, nor did it result from suddenly seeing the light. Were it to be likened to a waterfall cascading down Huang Shan (or 1,000 chi, its source was still a trickling creek in the towering heights).

This was the provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles!

Its birth was a process that provides food for thought.

At that time, Dazhai was the model for China's rural villages to emulate. As part of the "in agriculture, learn from Dazhai" campaign, the Anhui Provincial CPC

Committee especially established an "in agriculture, learn from Dazhai," which virtually replaced the functions of the former agricultural committee. At the same time, the Agricultural Committee Policy Research Office, headed by Zhou Yueh [0719 2574 4409], kept a close watch on the increasingly grim realities in rural villages.

Zhou Yueh was from a peasant blacksmith background. He joined the revolution as a young man and moved into Anhui with it. In 1961, he served as Comrade Zeng Xisheng's secretary, and he cherished a nostalgia and conviction about that period of historical revival that would be difficult to erase. When the "in agriculture, learn from Dazhai" campaign flared out the sky and covered the earth, and surged like a river or a tide from Langwozhang in Huitoushan, he kept a clear head. He firmly believed that "a single firm model should be applied to the whole country." He had never visited Dazhai, so, when he went, it was to the most impoverished and most dilapidated Jiangzhuang Production Brigade in Fengyang County where he stayed to gain firsthand experience and guide overall work. On this account, he was criticized by name by the Anhui representatives of Lin Biao and the gang of four: "You are trying to put on a rival show!"

The approaches of the "Dazhai Office" and the agricultural committee were entirely different, but both spread throughout the province and vied for support from the first secretary of the provincial CPC committee.

Wan Li was at the center of the struggle

The slogan, "in agriculture, learn from Dazhai" had been shouted for many years, but it had not brought any more hope to the rural villages of Anhui Province. Wan Li was not interested in the "false, big, and empty reports," or in accounts that reported only the good news but not the bad. He learned that Zhou Yueh, who had been cold-shouldered, was well versed in current rural events, so he decided to have Zhou Yueh for a long talk at his own place of abode.

The seamy side of things came out

Zhou Yueh went right to the heart of matters in reporting on the current situation in rural villages: "The male workers bring playing cards to work to play poker, and the female workers bring cloth shoes to stitch." "They pay no heed when the first whistle sounds, when they hear the second whistle, they look around, when the third whistle blows, they start to move slowly." Such a negative way of slowing down work is actually more damaging than a strike. It is really as destructive as death by the slow cutting away of flesh. At bottom, it is a policy problem, and it is a problem of people and the soil. Among rural cadres in Anhui, the following derisive rhyme is popular: "In Jiangsu, policies are stable; in Shandong, policies are brutal, and in Anhui, policies

make you pay interest on interest." The result of this usurious policy is even tighter control, making it ever harder for destitute Anhui to find a way out.

Wan Li interjected rather sympathetically, "Problems in rural Anhui are worse than in cities, and leftist problems are more prominent..."

This confidential talk went on late into the night, with both parties feeling that much more remained to be said.

When they arrived at work the following day, comrades on the agricultural committee asked what had been talked about. Zhou Yueh, who had been suppressed for so very long, and was never so excited said: "We hit it off right away!"

Not long afterward, in order to provide a genuinely reliable basis for the provincial CPC Committee's policies, the provincial agricultural committee drafted a "top-secret document" spelling out the serious damage caused by the leftist line in rural villages, which it forwarded to Wan Li. It was termed a "top-secret document" because many of the views it contained went against the tenor of the times, and had to be acted on with caution.

The main points of the document have been excerpted below:

6 Top Secret

(1) Exaggeration

A gross grain output of 34.563 billion jin was reported to higher authorities for the entire province in 1976. Analytical study by all quarters shows, however, that the actual output was only 31 billion jin. At a conversion rate of 3 jin of sweet potatoes to 1 jin of grain, the total output of sweet potatoes in terms of grain was only 3.48 billion jin. A false report of more than 2 billion jin was thus made for sweet potatoes alone.

In previous years, only 560 million jin had been reported as commodity output. In recent years, private plots have dwindled year by year, reverting to the collective in some places. In other places, the growing of grain on private plots was not allowed. Nevertheless, during 1977, commodity grain output was reported at 1.6 billion jin, a false report of approximately 1 billion jin being made in this category alone...

(2) Blind Direction

In Xiaoxian County, some production teams located on both sides of a highway had no water supply and insufficient fertilizer. These production teams were also more versed in growing dryland grain than growing paddy. Nevertheless, they were told to change to the growing of paddy. The result was a very small grain harvest, some places harvesting not a single grain. The highway that

passes by Wanglaojia Production Brigade in Meisun Commune has to be traveled during a visit to the area. Following the summer harvest in 1977, this production brigade planted more than 200 mu of soybeans on the south side of the highway. When they were more than 1 chi tall, (the leaders) found them offensive and ordered that paddy be planted instead. One night, they directed the deputy secretary of one commune to plow them under completely. Since no seedlings were available to plant paddy some were borrowed. The outcome was not a single grain harvested.

(3) Great Practice of Formalism

In order to get ready for inspections, during 1976 and 1977 Heda Production Brigade purchased more than 30 tons of lime for the whitewashing of walls. During the year and a half period from January 1976 through May 1977, the production brigade spent more than 30,000 yuan on lime, paper, ink, red cotton bunting, and propaganda signposts. It spent an additional more than 1,000 yuan on entertainment. During February 1978, it assembled more than 1,000 people for a work scene in the shooting of some pictures about taking part in collective production. The peasants went to the fields at dawn where they waited until 1000 before the leaders showed up. Four scenes were shot at a cost of more than 100 yuan.

7 Wan Li studied the "secret document," and urged Zhou Yueli on, saying: "Can all of you prepare pertinent policy views?"

Next, the provincial CPC Committee sent a survey team to Chuxian Prefecture in eastern Anhui.

Chuxian Prefecture is located between the two great rivers, the Chang Jiang and the Huai He. The prefecture is divided into six counties and one city. It has a land area of 13,300 square kilometers and a population of 3.43 million, 3.03 million of which is rural. This area has a north Asia tropical monsoon climate, with four distinct seasons and a moderate climate suitable for the growing of economically diversified paddy, wheat, and cotton crops. The Tianjin-Pukou and Huainan [Bengbu-Hefei-Wuhu] railroad lines traverse the prefecture, and highway and water transportation lines fan out in all directions. This is a fine land with a long history, a galaxy of talent, and plentiful products.

The sad fact is that, during the 20-year period from 1958 to 1978, gross output of grain and the gross output value of agriculture for the whole prefecture increased at 2.20 and 2.61 percent, respectively; the amount of grain per capita was only slightly more than 500 jin; and commune member collective earnings were only approximately 70 yuan per capita. The province's notoriously backward areas, Feng (yang), Ding (yuan), and Jia (shan) are located in this prefecture. In many communes and brigades in these counties, the grain ration is only about 300 jin, and annual per capita earnings are only about 50

yuan. Frequently, large numbers of peasants leave the prefecture in a flight from famine. When there is no one to farm the land, production does not rise, and there is no way to earn a living. This occurs year after year, in a vicious cycle, producing a worrisome predicament.

After many surveys, the provincial agricultural committee convened comrades in charge from all jurisdictions and cities in Chuxian Prefecture for a full discussion of conspicuous current conflicts in rural areas and the means of solving them. Everyone unified his understanding and collectively drafted the Six Articles, that is, the draft of "Regulations on Several Problems With Current Rural Economic Policies."

The main spirit of the provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles was respect for the right of production teams to make their own decisions, allowing peasants to engage in normal household sideline occupations, and permitting the sale of the harvest in country fair markets once state quotas were fulfilled. Production teams were able to institute responsibility systems that set quotas, quality, and work points, requiring only that responsibility for the completion of individual farm tasks be assigned to individuals.

This was the first pioneering document on rural policy to appear in a faltering China following the smashing of the gang of four.

The nerves that it touched were very sensitive.

In November 1977, the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee convened secretaries of prefecture, city, and county CPC committees in an enlarged meeting of the standing committee to discuss the articles one by one. Like a single stone causing a thousand ripples, they wrangled over the provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles, refusing to yield to each other in a serious ideological struggle.

Although the members of the Chinese Communist Party who had just awakened from an ultraleftist nightmare were moved to the depths of their souls by the pressure of history, casting off their own shackles was something that could not be done so consciously. It required a process of protracted experience and theoretical understanding.

"This is not a socialist direction!"

"Too much decisionmaking authority given to the peasants!"

"If this continues, won't there be a slide to 1961..."

The doubtful ones were not small in number, and they created no small amount of obstacles. Some additional liberal clauses that had been planned for inclusion had to

be temporarily shelved. People were already accustomed to ultraleftism and felt as though it alone was socialism. That people had misgivings was completely understandable.

Given this frame of mind, Wan Li gave special instructions to the agricultural committee: "No coercion! If some comrades have not straightened out their thinking, wait patiently, because lower-level comrades will have to be depended upon to do the actual work. If we insist on writing things into the articles that they will not accept, everything may be spoiled..."

As soon as the amended Provincial CPC Committee Six Articles were published, they spread like wildfire throughout the province and went on to attract the attention of the whole country.

HONGQI (RED FLAG) magazine, RENMIN RIBAO, and XINHUASHE hurriedly sent people to Anhui to find people to write articles about them. In March 1978, XINHUASHE broadcast Comrade Wan Li's article, "Backward Rural Economic Policy," which became an important news item at that time.

CPC Central Committee Vice Chairman Comrade Deng Xiaoping, who had just resumed work, warmly endorsed the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles. Passing through Sichuan Province on his way to visit Pakistan, he recommended them to the provincial CPC Committee first secretary, Zhao Ziyang.

Comrade Deng Xiaoping said, "We have to have some new ideas nowadays, and not always just the same old stuff. Before we had the Great Cultural Revolution, a lot of enterprise management came from the study of the USSR, which is relatively backward in the world. After the Great Cultural Revolution, we got rid of that, so now we have nothing."

The agricultural road has to be widened somewhat, and thinking has to be emancipated. When old ideas do not solve problems, there have to be new ideas...so long as the ownership system remains unchanged, what is there to fear? This is true for industry and it is true for agriculture. New ways of doing things must be thought up; we can't just keep going around in circles with old ideas.

The campaign to emancipate thinking was arousing China, and suffering Sichuan was also making new, fateful choices. How could the land of plenty bring to an end its history of selling boys and girls and take the road to prosperity?

The Sichuan Provincial CPC Committee under the leadership of Comrade Zhao Ziyang resisted ultraleftist pressure to promulgate the "Twelve Articles." From this time forward, Anhui and Sichuan were the first to ignite the fires of China's rural reforms, which illuminated a hungry and impoverished China.

"The Breach Widens..."

The provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles, and the policy of lending land to the peasants spread very fast. Even while some leaders were still feeling uneasy and turning over terminology in their minds to find theoretical grounds for the policies, within a single night a craze to "divide up the land and the fields" appeared on both depressed shores of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He.

Measure the land

Prepare for farming

Repair harrows

Mark stakes

Anxious and seething with excitement, the aroused peasants were far wiser than some of our cadres. They took action almost as fast as the news spread and was comprehended!

In response to being allowed to farm for themselves, harvest for themselves, and sell all surplus, the people along the river flats and the barren hills, whom no one had bothered with for many years, purred with pleasure, and for the first time a clamor to reclaim land arose. The peasants cling madly to the soil, and the soil holds fast the peasants' hearts. In the past, countless strong measures had been unable to halt the muddy flow of beggars, but now the powerful attraction of just 3 fen of land changed the flow of life.

Sealed doorways were pushed in or taken down

Over deathly still villages, smoke from cooking fires wafted once again like a dream

People regained their dignity

New problems appeared

The amount of loaned land was really too little, but people always want more than they get. The peasants had to do a small amount of production on the loaned land and they also had to toil without caring on the crops in the collective fields. The peasants who had had a taste of contracting production to individual households in 1961 were unable to keep from hoping that the land would be divided up completely as it had been in that year. Naturally, such ideas were dangerous, but as a result of the turning point marked by the loaned land, a latent yearning, like flaming magma beneath the earth, stirred the expectation of new things to come.

Ultimately, this expectation became reality.

The peasants of Anhui, who have a rebellious tradition, really possessed a "courage as big as the sky." They violated the restrictions ordered in the provincial CPC

Committee's Six Articles "not permitting the contracting of production to individual households, and not permitting the figuring of compensation according to output." They spontaneously enlarged the scope of the loaned land, some of them not only dividing up all the land, but also dividing up all livestock and farm implements.

The breach widened more and more!

The dike was about to collapse!

9. The 1961 contracting of production to individual households began in the suburbs of Hefei. Now, history was once again putting on a similar performance in a neighboring area. A sudden thunderclap in Feixi County, the most backward and most impoverished county in Shannan Prefecture, began the practice of contracting production to individual households.

The appearance of contracting of production to individual households shocked the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee, provoking an uproar in opinion from top to bottom.

Stirring the enthusiasm of the masses is a slogan that we communists shouted till we were hoarse, and when the masses were depressed, we shouted it till the heavens shook. But now that the enthusiasm of the masses had been truly stirred, some members of the Communist Party assumed an air of self-righteousness, and became overly critical.

Wan Li watched carefully the appearance of contracting production to individual households. The provincial CPC Committee had already abolished the "in agriculture, learn from Dazhai office" and had revived the functions of the agriculture committee. He did not let the explicit provisions of the provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles "not permitting the contracting of production to individual households, and not permitting the figuring of compensation according to output" to tie his hands. Instead, he let mass practice enrich and readjust itself.

He told Zhou Yueli, "If your office has something to report on the rural situation, send it directly to me!"

He urgently needed to obtain information from the rural grassroots.

If he did not see a situation report for several days, Wan Li seemed impatient and ill at ease, and he would say to comrades on the agricultural committee time and time again:

"Have any of you been down to the grassroots lately?"

"Is Old Zhou in?"

"Let's have a talk!"

"Be sure to investigate and study contracting production to individual households and figuring compensation according to output, and don't be too anxious to reveal a position. Let it develop, when the time comes, it can always be restudied again. Otherwise, the enthusiasm of the masses will be stifled..."

Since Feixi County was close by the provincial capital, a lot of information about it was available. The Shannan Prefecture CPC Committee's courageous innovations provoked numerous shock waves in organs of the provincial CPC Committee. People had diverse and confused views about it, and adopted a stand.

The provincial CPC cannot remain silent!

Wan Li supported the provincial CPC Committee meeting's unified view of the contracting of production to individual households in Shannan Prefecture, concluding that: "It should not be publicized, it should not be promoted, and it should not appear in newspapers. Let practice demonstrate whether or not it is correct."

This attitude was also rather clever.

It did not violate the spirit of the CPC Central Committee, while also showing tacit acknowledgement of the actions of the masses.

10. However, for the time being, only an extremely small number of people had really risen to clamor for contracting production to individual households. Since they directly violated the spirit of the CPC Central Committee instructions, this "extremely small number" was also facing the danger of destruction.

When the Provincial CPC Committee tacitly permitted contracting production to individual households, certain of our grassroots-level organizations that towed the line and did not dare overstep their bounds created a tragedy by strangling the enthusiasm of the peasants.

Strengthened through hardships, a peasant named Zhu Zhengqi [2612 2973 0796], who lived in Shierdan Production Team in Shenshan Production Brigade, Yingsong Commune, Lujiang County, saw contracting production to individual households being practiced during a visit to relatives in the Shannan District of Feixi County. After returning to his village, he secretly made an agreement with five peasant families to do the same thing. They obtained a rare bumper harvest from both the early rice crop and summer crops. Zhu Zhengqi's best harvest during the "great uproar" period was a little more than 2,900 jin of grain, but in less than 1 year after contracting production to individual households, he harvested 400 jin of wheat, and 3,200 jin of other principal grain crops.

This feat did not make the county CPC Committee happy, however; instead, he incurred criticism from it: "This is not permissible behavior!"

"It turns the whole county upside down!"

As though facing an enemy, the county CPC committee formed an investigation team of seven cadres, which went to the Shierdan Production Team to collect "criminal evidence" on Zhu Zhengqi.

Criticism and struggle

Reporting and arrest

It was only because the sympathetic county public security bureau director refused to make a report that Zhu Zhengqi managed to avoid imprisonment.

The investigation team did not stop there. It took command of Shierdan Production Team, refusing to allow Zhu Zhengqi, and the other five peasant families who had practiced contracting production to individual households to go to work in the fields. It made them dangle for more than 2 months. As a result, their late rice crop yield fell because it was not irrigated on time. The investigation team used this drop in yield as testimony to the failure of contracting production to individual households.

Zhu Zhengqi's tragedy frightened some peasants who were thinking of practicing, and who were practicing, contracting production to individual households. Faced with suppression, encirclement, and attack, peasants everywhere addressed hurried inquiries to the provincial and central authorities.

They asked the investigation team righteously and forcefully: "Is it illegal to increase grain yields?"

"Can the discussion of the standard for truth be applied to rural villages?"

"We hear that the country is still importing grain. Do you mean to say that contracting production to individual households is not better than importing grain?"

They pressured the investigation team to answer these questions.

Later, one, a county CPC Committee leader, sighed with feeling: "Contracting production to individual households has been going on for a year; we have been afraid for a year, passive for a year, and silent for a year. The masses have opposed us for a year; they have worked hard for a year, and output has increased for a year..."

Naturally, many Communist Party members were also engaged in a performance with a happy ending. A deputy director of the revolutionary committee of Yanchen Commune in Lai'an County named Zhang Jiafa [1728 1367 3127] went to Weiyang Production Team to gain firsthand experience in guiding overall work during the

great drought years. The production team had a population of only 101 in 21 households, a work force of 41 males and females, 165 mu of cultivated land, and a pathetic 4 head of draft oxen.

He became disgusted!

He made up his mind to institute the figuring of compensation according to output.

As a result, males and females, and the young and the old from all families went to work. In less than half a month all the fields were manured, and even the commune CPC Committee praised as a lifesaver the figuring of compensation according to output.

A meeting of commune CPC secretaries from all over the county, a person in charge of a county CPC Committee slapped the table as he rose to his feet to denounce the Weiyang practices as "a repeat of contracting production to individual households," and "a revival of the 'Liu Shaoqi line.'"

Strangely in one way, yet not strangely in another, wherever the masses practiced contracting production to individual households and figuring of compensation according to output, there were always some leaders who wanted to cut them down.

In 1956 Weiyang Production Team had a bumper harvest, gross output of grain totaling more than 90,000 jin. During the following 23 years, however, it hovered around 80,000 jin. With the implementation of figuring of compensation according to output during the 1978 famine year, however, total grain output leaped to 120,000 jin, surpassing plan and surpassing the all-time high.

Weiyang attracted the attention of leaders in Chuxian Prefecture, and it also attracted the attention of hesitant people in suffering.

In September 1978, not long after the provincial CPC Committee produced the policy decision of lending land to the peasants, the Chuxian Prefecture CPC Committee convened a meeting of level-4 cadres. This was supposed to have been a regular meeting, but conflicts between the two approaches was rather intense. Numerous commune secretaries anxiously raised a question that made many people think deeply: "Just what is the reason why agriculture does not improve?"

"One commune does not improve and two communes do not improve. Why is it that more than 200 communes throughout the region do not improve? Are we all bloody fools?"

They insisted that the prefecture CPC Committee emancipate its thinking, and give lower levels the freedom to operate. If this works out, no praise will be needed; if it doesn't work out, it will automatically disappear!

The prefecture CPC Committee seethed with anxiety, unable to make up its mind what to do. It ended up both making a report to Comrade Wan Li and sending a team to Weiyang to conduct an inspection.

Its horizons enlarged!

"Well, I'll be damned, so this is the way it is done!"

The prefecture required that each county set up a production brigade or commune-size pilot project. When the news got around, units nearly knocked down the door trying to be chosen as a pilot project. Later on, even some units that had not been selected as pilot projects also ran some "trials." No matter how some people restricted them, the forbidden zones of contracting production to individual households and figuring of compensation according to output had been demolished by the peasants' struggle.

According to 1978 figures, the practice of these two forms of responsibility system had spread to more than 30,000 production teams throughout the province, an unprecedented miracle. The province's autumn sowing area was 29 million mu, and summer grain output for 1979 totaled 7.8 billion jin, with the result that Anhui Province got safely through the worst drought in 100 years.

Wan Li made a report to the CPC Central Committee in the manner of seeking truth in facts: "A small number of places practiced contracting production to individual households, and figuring of compensation according to output to see whether it should be tried out. If this was a mistake, the provincial CPC Committee bears responsibility!"

Spring in Winter

11 History will not forget the bone-chilling winter at the end of 1978. A blinding blizzard attacked from Siberia, traversed the open Mongolian steppe, crossed through openings in the tumble-down Great Wall, spread into the Yanshan hinterland, and moved into the ancient capital of Beijing.

Automobiles were lined up outside the eastern entrance to the Great Hall of the People. Although still under wraps at that time, people who went through Tiananmen Square on their way to and from work had a feeling that an important meeting was in session. This was the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee.

Communist Party members who arrived in the middle of a blizzard had gathered here from all directions. Their mood was as depressed as the leaden layer of clouds.

A gloomy atmosphere shrouded the dejected nation.

12 In 1976, there was a great tilt in the divine land of China.

In 1976, there was a great disjunction in history.

No one knows what China will be like in the future, and no one knows what future road China will take. However, at this serious juncture, history chose a new successor. In the wake of the national jubilation over the smashing of the gang of four, Hua Guofeng became the "wise leader worthy of our party and our armed forces." That was a day of dramatic change in China's political life! Now we saw a huge picture of Hua Guofeng on the masthead of every major newspaper in the place where Mao Zedong's picture had been. On the rostrum of Tiananmen, where Mao Zedong had stood, Hua Guofeng made solemn reviews. The hymn, *The East is Red* gave way to "In the great mountains is a guerrilla band, and in the guerrilla band is Commissar Hua." Everything was so strange yet everything was also so familiar. It was just an extension of a replaying of history.

On 7 February 1977, the three most authoritative periodicals, RENMIN RIBAO, HONGQI, and JIEFANGJUN BAO published an editorial titled, "Study the Documents Well To Grasp the Program." This editorial said, "Whatever decisions Chairman Mao made, we resolutely support, and whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave, we will steadfastly abide by."

This was the new leader's manifesto!

Next, Hua Guofeng presided over the convening of a national "In Agriculture, Learn From Dazhai" conference, in which Dazhai's experiences in "mass criticism to spur mass work" were held up as the only road for China's rural development.

No one had ever suspected that Mao Zedong's thought would continue to lead, continue to control China's rural progress, and continue to control the fate of hundreds of millions of peasants now that he had passed away.

13 However, only 2 years and 3 months after Mao Zedong's passing, the Chinese people were engulfed by new difficulties. The turmoil that had lasted 10 years had just come to an end, and people were astonished to learn that this so-called "continuing revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat" had brought the national economy to the verge of collapse. The people had sunk into even deeper and more serious hardships.

When Mao Zedong passed away, people were grieved and shocked, but now, in calmer times, they began to criticize his merits and demerits, his rights and wrongs.

Mao Zedong made the following self-criticism: "I did two things in my whole life. One, I founded new China; and two, I carried out the Great Cultural Revolution." Indeed, Comrade Mao Zedong won victory in armed struggle, but this also led to a different outcome in the building of the economy. From the impatient and rash advance of 1958 to the expanded antirightism of 1957

from the Great Leap Forward of 1958 to the antirightist campaign of 1959, and from the "Four Clean-Ups" movement of 1963 to the great turmoil of 1966, the ultraleftist line held the dominant position. Mao Zedong discussed the building of the economy very, very little, but he discussed class struggle very, very much.

Nevertheless, China's political life was undergoing major changes. The great discussion of "practice is the only standard for testing truth" stirred the consciousness of the Chinese people about the cult of the individual. People suddenly realized that Mao Zedong's agricultural policies had not been ideal, and if they continued to be followed, China's rural villages would linger in despair, and a tragedy such as the famine of 1960 might occur.

Only by courageously repudiating them would it be possible to move ahead fearlessly.

During the winter of 1978, the severe cold in people's hearts was far colder than the elements.

14 Severe cold also gripped the site of the Anhui delegation and enveloped the first secretary of the provincial CPC committee, Wan Li.

He had been troubled and unable to sleep for several days. Agitation for contracting production to individual households was stirring in the land of the Chang Jiang and the Huai. One problem about which he had thought countless times without reaching a solution gripped his mind: The masses support contracting production to individual households wholeheartedly, yet some comrades regard it as a great scourge.

Where is the crux of the problem?

The answer is that unless the shackles of the "two whatevers" are removed, the production responsibility system of contracting production to individual households will be throttled once again.

Two months earlier, while preparing to take part in the 3d Plenary Session, Wan Li visited numerous counties, districts, communes, and brigades on both shores of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He, in the course of which he investigated and studied the problem of how China's rural villages could get out of their predicament, and expressed his own ideas. These ideas, which reflected the sense of mission of a Communist Party member who was attuned to the common people and who had struggled in the abyss of misfortune, made him want to stand up at once and speak out.

The outline of this statement, titled "Several Important Problems in Agriculture Requiring Solution" was a distillation of the experiences and lessons he had gained in the development of agriculture in Anhui for 29 years. In discussing the people's commune system, which bound people forcibly, Wan Li sharply pointed out its disadvantages in this outline.

The existing people's commune system combines government administration with commune management. Actually, it combines the party, government, and commune into one.

First, superficially, it seems to strengthen party leadership of the people's communes, when actually it is neither able to concentrate forces to take hold of party work, nor is it able to concentrate forces to take hold of production. Frequently, there are too many things to take care of at the same time.

Second, communes concentrate party, political, and production authority in the person of the CPC first secretary. This is an overconcentration of authority which makes it easy for authority to be used to control and direct production according to the principal officer's wishes.

Third, people's communes are socialist collective economic organizations for mutual assistance and mutual benefit, which should fully exhibit the spirit of the masses being masters of their own affairs, but party and government leaders who supplant commune committee leaders are disadvantageous to the development of production.

For the foregoing reasons, it is recommended that the prevailing people's commune management system be reformed, government administration and commune management being separated in light of the experience with administrative systems gained during the period of the advanced agricultural production cooperatives, and with reference to state-owned enterprises being solely economic units and not power organs. Consideration should be given to establishing townships in commune areas, large townships in large communes, and small townships in small communes.

That was in the autumn of 1978. The frozen clouds over China had not yet gone away when Wan Li proposed a reform of the combination of government administration and commune management in people's communes. He certainly deserves praise. Not only did he analyze the present, he also foresaw the future.

In connection with the "in agriculture, learn from Dazhai," and "popularize Dazhai County" campaigns, which were sweeping China at the time, Wan Li noted incisively—

For Anhui, there is only a small amount of good, but a lot of bad to be learned. Examples include taking back private plots, abolishing household sideline occupations, shutting down country fair trade, instituting political work points, recording "probable work," the appearance of egalitarianism in figuring compensation for labor, as well as the possibility of arbitrarily changing ownership systems without regard for objective conditions, enlarging communes and merging brigades.

premature transition to a higher form of public ownership on the basis of the same low level of productive forces, and great practice of formalism in the founding of new villages and in capital construction of farmland, causing serious consequences.

For the country as a whole, the slogan "popularize Dazhai County" is not suitable. The requirement to build Dazhai counties is actually not easy to achieve.

Commenting on "running political campaigns year after year," Wan Li made the following strong appeal:

In the 28 years since liberation, there has been a political movement virtually every year in the countryside, and every campaign has attacked leadership teams at all levels, leading to frequent changes. The lack of continuity in leadership teams is the general rule in prefecture and county CPC Committees, and is even more serious in the rural grassroots cadre corps.

In order to achieve relative continuity in leadership teams, cannot consideration be given to not conducting political campaigns in rural areas in some years, transferring main energies to building production and the technological revolution.

15 This was no ordinary speech draft, but was a record of profound thinking inscribed on the good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He. This was a stimulus for a new line of thinking, and this was the victory of a new line of thinking. It applied not only to Anhui, but to the country as a whole. It applied not only to the present, but to the future as well.

It was a cause for rejoicing when the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee halted use of the erroneous slogan, "take class struggle as the key link," and made a strategic decision to shift emphasis to economic construction.

In addition, two important documents drawn up by the session, namely, "Decisions on Various Problems in Hastening the Development of Agriculture (Draft)" and "Work Regulations for Rural People's Communes (Trial Draft)," emphasized liberalization of rural policies, lightened peasants' burdens, encouraged and supported rural family sideline occupations, and established agricultural production responsibility systems. They specifically permitted the contracting of work to units, figuring compensation on the basis of output, opening the way for their acceptance and promotion throughout the country.

The good earth was thawing.

"RENMIN RIBAO Is Like a Bus; You Crowd Me and I'll Crowd You!"

16 In 1979, spring arrived on both banks of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He once again. The communique of the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, which highly evaluated discussion of "practice is the sole standard for testing truth," was of major significance in determining China's destiny, but as the product of a specific historical climate, it still provided explicitly that "the dividing up of fields for individual farming is not allowed, and contracting production to individual households is not allowed."

During the busy spring plowing season, a rather violent wind for the correction of deviations blew across the good earth of China...

On 15 March, in the prominent place usually reserved for editorials, RENMIN RIBAO published a reader's letter under the title, "Three-Level Ownership Founded on Production Teams Should Be Made Permanent."

The writer was a cadre in the Gansu Provincial Archives Bureau. In the letter, he wrote disapprovingly as follows: "During a visit to my old hometown in Luoyang Prefecture, Henan Province, I heard about and I saw that quite a few counties and communes were considering contracting production to individual households, and I was concerned." Using a phrase used by the masses, he said that this is not the spirit of the CPC Central Committee, but rather an "indigenous method." He agreed that "for the purposes of convenience in management and strengthening of a sense of responsibility, a division into work teams was permissible," but "blithely retreating from 'production teams as the foundation' to engage in the dividing up of land among teams and the contracting of production to teams was to be divorced from the masses, and was not wanted." He believed that "the suspicions and apprehensions of cadres and the masses are justified, and their opposition to dividing the land is correct." "Likewise, it will make a mess of the system of tri-level ownership founded on production teams, confuse the thinking of cadres and the masses, stifle initiative, damage production, and is also not beneficial to the mechanization of agriculture." "This problem should be seriously considered and solved." In addition to publishing this reader's letter, RENMIN RIBAO published an editor's note, which supported the letter. Taking up fully one-half page, its importance was evident.

First, this letter aroused a storm in the writer's hometown, Luoyang in Henan Province. In a letter to RENMIN RIBAO, Comrade Xie Mengguan [6200 1125 0385] of the correspondence section of the Yichuan County CPC Committee in Henan Province wrote: "People were shocked for a time at the reader's letter that was unexpectedly published on 15 March." "The simple peasants and able-bodied working households had hoped that responsibility systems might be instituted, but after hearing broadcasts of your article, they

no longer hauled manure to the fields...and some people took the opportunity to create rumors, saying that the Luoyang Prefecture CPC Committee had committed mistakes." In order to halt this tumultuous situation, the Luoyang CPC Committee convened a meeting of all county and city CPC Committee first secretaries from 18 through 20 March at which everyone entered into lively discussions. Hu Zhaoxiang [5170 0340 4382], a member of the standing committee of the Luoyang Prefecture CPC Committee and concurrently deputy chairman of the prefecture revolutionary committee, was incensed and composed a piece of doggerel on the spot: "So and So does not write a good article, but pours cold water all over Luoyang..." This rhyme, which represented the thinking of country and municipal CPC Committee secretaries, spread widely for a time.

Storm clouds were beginning to spread.

17 For Anhui, which had been the earliest province in the whole country to institute agricultural responsibility systems, the publication of this letter was almost explosive. The situations that the letter raised, although in reference to Henan, held implications for the land of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He: Anhui. The letter stressed that the deviation to be corrected was the contracting of production to units," and Anhui had long ago gone beyond this stricture to institute contracting production to individual households. It had gone much farther than Henan.

Anhui was suddenly in turmoil!

When the letter was made the lead news item in the joint news program of the Central People's Broadcasting Station, all districts and communes in Fengyang County were holding a tri-level cadre conference on mobilizing for spring plowing and production. At once, those who advocated the practice of large-scale contracting of work became worried and uncertain, supposing that another major change was in the offing. Thereafter, there was no advocacy of large-scale contracting of work, and those who termed large-scale contracting of work as tri-level semi-ownership were pleased. For a time, the storm clouds rose all around.

"This is the voice of the party newspaper!"

"There is support behind this!"

"These are certainly the words of a 'very important person'."

"Better make corrections right away so as not to commit an error..."

The Fengyang County CPC Committee was in a frightening predicament. "Superiors" would not permit it to continue, and if it persisted, it might be "put in jail." If

it halted the large-scale contracting of work, it would be absolutely impossible to force the separated communes and brigades to go back together again.

The county CPC Committee convened an emergency meeting of the standing committee at which feelings ran high, and controversy was endless. When it came the turn came for county CPC Committee First Secretary Chen Tingyuan [7115 1656 0337] to speak, he said calmly, in an almost quavering voice: "The consequences of the present correction of deviation can hardly be imagined. Fengyang cannot continue to flounder, and there is not enough time for further controversy. The enthusiasm of the masses has just been aroused. All of you can continue; if problems arise, the county CPC Committee will take responsibility. If there is an investigation to fix responsibility, say that I, Chen Tingyuan, made you do it..."

Chuxian Prefecture was worried.

The prefecture secretary, Wang Yuzhao [3769 6735 2507], personally telephoned Chen Tingyuan to inquire with concern about his reaction to the reader's letter

"What's going on?"

"Lots of controversy!"

"What do you think?"

"We're like Young Wang building a pig sty, all hearts are for Anhui."

18 It is 16 March, the day following RENMIN RIBAO'S publication of the reader's letter.

As soon as Wan Li alighted from a car in Quanjiao County in Chuxian Prefecture, to which he had traveled from Chaohu Prefecture to find out how spring plowing and production were going, he was surrounded by the worried-looking leaders of the county CPC Committee.

Wan Li also felt shocked.

Faced with cadres and a public that did not know what to do, Wan Li had to state his own views.

With deep understanding and consolation, he said: "I saw that letter from the person in the Gansu Archives Bureau in some material circulated for internal use only. I never thought it would be published. In my view, that letter does not oppose contracting production to teams, it only reports problems that exist in contracting of production to teams." The problems that RENMIN RIBAO criticized are side issues. Don't worry. After continuing another year, we'll see..."

The county CPC Committee leaders remained fretful: "The RENMIN RIBAO editor's note said that contracting production to teams is a 'wrong way to do things'..."

Wan Li replied: "What is a right way? Whatever increases agricultural production is a right way, whatever increases the income of the country, collectives, and individuals is a right way; and whatever suits the development of productivity and makes agriculture improve faster is a right way. The opposite is a wrong way. Whenever one wind or another blows, we should not waver. Some production teams in Feixi County have instituted contracting production to individual households. So what is to be done? I say that, since it is being done, don't bother it. As soon as you bother it, there'll be a mess..."

The county CPC Committee leaders also said: "Some people here say that contracting production to teams is three-level semi-ownership..."

Wan Li said straightforwardly: "And what is wrong with three-level semi-ownership? It is also an economic accounting unit! Four-level accounting is all right too, and households have to account too, and that makes five levels, doesn't it?"

The county CPC Committee leaders were still worried that RENMIN RIBAO had powerful backing, and they feared that they would not be able to hold fast in the future. Wan Li had an inspiration. He said: "RENMIN RIBAO is like a bus. You may crowd me and I may crowd you! Just what ideas are consistent with the people's fundamental interests and long-term interests is something that has to be tested through practice. One cannot beat a retreat and stifle the masses' initiative after reading a letter to the editor. When output does not increase and the people's bellies are hungry, who is to be held responsible, your CPC Committee or RENMIN RIBAO? RENMIN RIBAO cannot see that you get food to eat..."

On the same day, Wan Li made a long distance telephone call from Chuxian Prefecture to Wang Renzhong [3769 0117 6850], chairman of the State Agricultural Committee, to whom he reported: "We have already begun. No publicity, no promotion, and nothing in the newspapers in order to protect the initiative of the masses. Putting it on the record, making a mistake about the provincial CPC Committee's investigation...."

Comrade Wang Renzhong said: "Since the provincial CPC Committee decided, it can be done!"

19 A hostel in the Xuanwu District of Beijing. Comrades Xin Sheng [6584 3932] and Lu Jia [4151 1367] from the Anhui Provincial Agricultural Committee are bending over a table reading a challenge to the reader's letter.

On 30 March, RENMIN RIBAO also published on its front page a letter that Comrades Xin and Lu had written, titled "Treat Correctly Responsibility Systems Linked to Production." The letter sharply criticized the reader's letter and the editor's note: "This has created confusion here." "The cadres and masses who are

already practicing responsibility systems linked to output involving contracting to teams are fearful lest they be criticized again. Those who feared a change in party policies all along are now even more apprehensive. Some people read the newspaper as though looking for new arguments, saying that responsibility systems linked to output have no redeeming features." "Why are they regarded as wrong methods that must be rectified? When the gang of four was on the rampage, the term 'contracting' was looked upon as a scourge. Not only was contracting production to teams not allowed, but even allotting responsibility for certain phases of work was criticized." "You had better believe that an overwhelming majority of the masses can make distinctions. Just provide a large framework, don't insist that the masses may adopt only one method but may not adopt another method."

RENMIN RIBAO also appended an editor's note to this reader's letter under the title, "Make the Most of the Superiority of the Collective Economy: Suit General Methods to Specific Situations in Instituting Methods for Figuring Compensation." The Anhui letter said that in the reader's letter and the editor's note published on 15 March, "some of the wording was not accurate," and "this should be corrected in the future." At the same time, it stressed that "contracting work to teams and payment linked to output is a new method for figuring compensation. For problems of one kind or another to arise in the course of trying it out is unavoidable. So long as production team centralized accounting and centralized distribution are maintained, with no contracting of production to individual households and the dividing up of fields for individual farming, it may be tried out."

The spring of 1979 was a spring of intense controversy between two approaches. It was a spring in which various kinds of responsibility systems displayed themselves.

Rectification of error and antirectification of error!

Breakthrough and antibreakthrough!

Reflection and antireflection!

"Let's Apply for a Residence Permit for the Contracting of Production to Individual Households!"

20 Contracting production to individual households remained a forbidden zone not to be overstepped. Even though the great discussion about "practice being the sole standard for testing truth" had permeated people's minds, and even though communes and brigades that practiced contracting production to individual households brought in unprecedentedly large harvests, "higher authorities" still insisted on not allowing contracting production to individual households. These five words stood like five mountains blocking the way out. Worse yet, they were solemnly written atop official party documents. Anyone thinking of overstepping it should first consider his own weight.

There are always reckless people in the world!

Anhui was launching a bold advance across the forbidden zone.

In 1979, the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee was going through difficulties. It was under tremendous external pressures, and these pressures virtually besieged Anhui on all sides.

Just as the Shannan District of Feixi County was a target of public criticism throughout Anhui, Anhui Province, which had taken the lead in contracting production to individual households was also a target of public criticism throughout China. It had repeatedly broken through the forbidden zone. When contracting production to teams was not allowed, it practiced contracting production to teams, and when contracting production to individual households was not allowed, it had the impudence to contract production to individual households in a rather aggressive way, fearing neither heaven nor earth.

Neighboring provinces could not sit still!

Jiangsu and Anhui are territorially contiguous, the fields in one province abutting those in the other. During the "great uproar," peasants from Jiangsu who were at their wits' end looked with astonishment at the tremendous changes that were going on in Anhui. People who regarded contracting production to individual households as "wrongdoing that would be punished" clearly felt the attack and the threat from Anhui, and feared that this wind of "restoration of the old order" and of "regression" might blow into their own fields.

Next, the following scene appeared: In the villages, road intersections, hills, and ends of fields on the border between Jiangsu and Anhui, large slogans were painted, and numerous villages used high-decibel loudspeakers to launch fierce "attacks" on Anhui:

"Resolutely oppose the 'trend to go it alone'!"

"Resolutely oppose restoration of the old order and regression!"

"Resolutely criticize the baneful influence of the 'three freedoms and one contract,' and the 'four freedoms'!"

"..."

Furthermore, newspaper offices even prepared more than 10 printed pages, threatening to "torpedo" Anhui's contracting production to individual households. A specter had just risen from the dead and was stirring up a mighty storm.

And it couldn't be blocked.

Here was located the Xiahu Production Team of Shuanglong Production Brigade, in Zhuzhen Commune, Liuhe County, Jiangsu, which shouted loudly through the loudspeakers, and right next door was the Liucheng Production Team of Qinjiang Production Brigade in Longshan Commune, Lai'an County, Anhui Province.

Natural conditions in Liucheng Production Team, particularly water conservancy conditions were not nearly as good as those in Xiahu Production Team. Every since cooperativization, it had been a poor production team. When this production team instituted contracting to individual households in 1979, it underwent a great transformation, its gross output of grain setting an all-time record. The joyous scene of every family increasing production, and every household having a bumper harvest attracted the people in Xiahu Production Team, where the commune members constantly grumbled against leaders who would only permit the contracting of work quotas, but would not permit contracting production to individual households.

Liu Jiang [0491 3068], deputy secretary of the Qinjiang Production Brigade Party Branch said to visiting correspondents: "Here in Jiangsu, we envy Anhui; the people in Anhui are so happy that oil runs out of the cracks in their behinds..."

History was playing a small joke. On the one hand, they used big loudspeakers to shout "resolutely oppose the 'tendency to go it alone!'" while girls from Jiangsu were running under the loudspeakers to get to Anhui. Liucheng Production Team had six young couples marry. In five of the couples, the girls came from Jiangsu.

This was people's desire! No matter the detachment and no matter the disdain, contracting production to individual households showed more and more magical fascination.

Thanks to agricultural production responsibility systems for contracting production to individual households and figuring compensation on the basis of output, Anhui Province's gross output of grain reached 32 billion jin in 1979 in overfulfillment of state plan. Places scoring an all-time high included Chuxian, Anqing, Chizhou, and Wuhu Prefectures, plus 21 counties, including Wuwei, Yingchang, Fengyang, Shucheng, and Suixi. Not counting Fuyang Prefecture, where a flood reduced output, the only other counties south of the Huai He showing a decline in output were Huoqiu and Changfeng. In the three notoriously poverty-stricken areas in the province, namely Sixian, Wuhe, Lingbi, and Guzhen; Dingyuan, Fengyang, and Jiashan; and Yicheng, Langxi, and Guangde Counties, grain output increased 30 percent.

In January 1980, Anhui Province convened a agricultural work conference attended by cadres at the county CPC committee secretary level and above. This was for the purpose of conducting an annual summarization and

review of [responsibility systems, and also for the purpose of planning and mobilizing for spring plowing and production. This was a conference for striking while the iron was hot, which the people of the whole province naturally followed with great interest.

After Yingshang County reported success, the head of Huoqiu County, who was ill at ease because his county had a shortfall in output, walked to the platform—every eye in the hall on him—to deliver a self-criticism.

Following the self-criticism, Wan Li criticized him severely saying: "There were no special circumstances in your county. Yingshang County had an increase in output; why did you have a decrease in output?"

"..."

"The truth is that you did not do things according to the views of the masses. You took a good situation and made a mess of it!"

"..."

"You should not 'buck' the masses! When we compare Yingshang and Huoqiu Counties, you won't accept it. Zhouying District in your own Huiqiu County increased output, and conditions elsewhere in the county are no worse than in Zhouji District, so why did your output drop, causing such a great loss for the common people? There'll have to be some early changes made in your leadership team! Unless something more is done, opportunities will be missed. I'm not afraid to offend people; I do things according to principles. You cannot barter away the interests of the common people! If the provincial CPC Committee doesn't do a good job, we have to admit errors to the Central Committee and take our punishment. So when a county doesn't do a good job, or when a prefecture doesn't do a good job, they have to take responsibility; otherwise Anhui will never get ahead! Your county CPC Committee made mistakes. We can't let the common people go hungry. Some only have 200 jin or so of grain to eat. Such a big problem won't do..."

This was the first time since taking office that Wan Li had become angry in public.

He made up his mind to remove the first secretary of the Huoqiu County CPC Committee.

Zhou Rili tried to smooth things over: "It's a problem of understanding. No experience, plus natural disaster. He can be transferred!"

The county CPC Committee secretary was transferred elsewhere. This was the final decision.

Even though some leading comrades had to accept the proof and the verdict of practice, suddenly cutting their ties in a "big, clean-cut way" was far from being that

easy. For those leading cadres who had gone from elementary agricultural producers' cooperatives to advanced agricultural producers' cooperatives to people's communes, in particular, it was very difficult to make a change. They felt the need to apologize to the spirit of Comrade Mao Zedong in the sky, and they experienced the uneasy feeling of having departed from the classics and rebelled against orthodoxy. Quite a few had such a feeling.

A no-holds-barred controversy unfolded at the meeting. Chuxian, Xuancheng, and Liuan Prefectures were for going on with contracting production to individual households and figuring compensation on the basis of output, but Anqing, Hefei, Wuhu, and Fuyang Prefectures made no proposal to go on. The one best able to express the feelings of the naysayers was the chairman of the Suxian Prefecture CPC Committee. His voice croaked, tears streamed down his face, and he almost cried out loud—"What kind of socialism is this! Chairman Mao and the others struggled so bitterly for decades, but we? Back to 'before liberation' in a single step..."

These feelings were sincere.

But it was also these sincere feelings that prevented steps from being taken to do something new.

He felt the need to apologize to the old one, but who would apologize to our peasant brethren, and apologize to the motherlike good earth?

22 Unless this "emotional impasse" could be solved, any thought of finally liberating the people and the land would remain impossible.

Thus, Wan Li made a long speech at the meeting titled, "Need To Dare To Reform Agriculture," which was both critical and persuasive, and both analytical and warming. Like an ordinary party member taking part in a party cell meeting, he revealed his own heart to those attending the meeting.

"...Ever since the antirightist campaign, there has been no enduring stability and unity. Why has Jiangsu Province developed faster? Fewer big upheavals. At least, several million people were not killed there as were in Anhui. So, everyone should accept the lessons of history on this matter. It has very greatly harmed the people and very greatly injured the cadres. Why is it that contracting production to individual households arouses such strong opinion in Anhui? We have persevered for many years. We fought when we arrived and a reaction came when we began to draw up the Six Articles. We were labeled 'terrible'. Some well-intending people told us not to make a mistake. They did this out of lingering fears. Some people said: 'If you get the jet-propelled torture again, you won't be able to stand it!' I'm 60 years old...I had better be afraid! Yesterday there were some big character posters about me in the streets. They were very

long. Some said Uncle Wan and others said Secretary Wan. Anyhow, they were there. The day that big character posters start going up is the day that production is unable to go up...

"The word bao [0545] has a good meaning. It appears, for example, in 'large-scale contracting [dabaogan [1129 0545 1626]]' in Fengyang,' as well as in railroad parlance, for instance, a 'responsible crew [baochengzu 0545 0042 4809] for International Working Women's Day.' This is native Chinese usage, so there is nothing to fear about the word bao! As a result of long-term economic backwardness, a poorly run collective economy, serious interference from an ultraleftist trend of thought, and a life that has always been extremely deprived, the masses became accustomed to a small-scale agricultural economy. This has historical origins and class origins. Contracting production to individual households is not something we proposed. The problems already existed, and the child was already born. Its mother was extremely happy. Ah! This will solve a lot of problems. Better apply for a residence permit. The child is wonderful! Many people went to see it and felt very warm, but after returning, they cooled off. And why? Illegal; will be criticized! There is nothing frightening about contracting production to individual households! Our basic attitude is to do nothing that will attack the masses' initiative. The masses have already approved, and are imploring: 'Let us do it for 2 years, will you! Comrades, approve it! Why not? Why so much blame! I do not agree with such views..."

Agricultural production responsibility systems in which contracting production to individual households is the main element emerged from the secrecy of "no publicity, no promotion, and no newspaper reports" to appear on the boundlessly wide rural political stage!

Chapter 4. A Risky Experiment—Feixi: "Contracting Production to Individual Households" Experiences Hardships

"Gutsy Tang" the Whirlwind

I A whirlwind; a swift and fierce whirlwind!

On my first night after arriving in Feixi County, I stayed at the county CPC Committee guesthouse where I met a brawny man as straight as a pine and with the booming voice of a gong. This was the secretary of the former Shannan District CPC Committee, Tang Maolin [3282 5399 2651]. All of his actions, whether walking along a road or speaking, possessed a lively rhythm, and wherever he went, he immediately stirred up a storm. The contracting production to individual households storm that he blew up and that spread throughout the whole county, the whole prefecture, the whole province, and even the whole country was as bad as a violent earthquake.

Shannan District was the hot spot in Feixi County, and Tang Maolin was the hot spot within that hot spot.

During his third year as secretary of the Shannan District CPC Committee, i.e., 1978, the worst drought in 100 years occurred. The fields smoked and the ponds dried up. Though the early paddy crop had been harvested, autumn plowing and autumn sowing was impossible. People were at the end of their tether. Not to plant the fields in autumn was tantamount to being choked to death the following year.

At this time, the provincial CPC Committee had already published the Six Articles and made the decision to lend land to the peasants. The policy relaxation provided Tang Maolin an opportunity for a courageous display of his capabilities.

Let us take a look at that critical page of the calendar, which has been turned over, but which will never be forgotten!

2 / September

An unbearably torrid summer night. Tang Maolin is in a thatched cottage in Huanghua Production Brigade in Shishu Commune where, under a dim light, he has convened an enlarged party branch meeting attended by 23 party members from throughout the production brigade. They are discussing the provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles, and ways to beat the drought to continue farming.

"Isn't there some way to do fall planting?" he began.

Sighs.

Moans.

The weather is muggy, but the mood is even muggier. Finally, someone says in a tentative tone: "Secretary Tang, there is a way..."

"What is that?"

"To do what was done in 1961..."

"Contract production to individual households?"

"Yes!"

"For God's sake!" Tang Maolin's whole body sprang from the seat; his eyes became as big around as a gong, and he pounded the table over and over, saying, "Out of the question, out of the question! The authorities will not allow contracting production to individual households and they will not permit dividing the fields for individual farming!"

"Well, then there's nothing else that can be done!"

"Nothing at all?"

"Nothing..."

Even though Tang Maolin was afraid, people were talking all at once in favor of "trying it out" as a stopgap measure. Contract 5 mu of wheat land and 5 mu of rape land to every worker. Set a yield of 200 jin per mu of wheat and 100 jin per mu of rape. Set costs (for seed and chemical fertilizer) at 5 yuan per mu; set a bonus for exceeding yields of 60 jin per mu for ever 100 jin of excess grain yield; and set a penalty system of a 100-percent fine for failing to meet the set quota. Party members said confidently: "If we really do this, maybe fall planting can be completed in 10 to 15 days..."

He did not want to say how he felt, but he had to say how he felt. After pondering for a while, he said ambiguously: "I'll go back and air it with comrades in the district CPC Committee..."

3 2 September

Today is the day when the first secretary of the county CPC Committee, Chang Zhenying [1603 2182 5391] arrives in Shannan District.

After Tang Maolin finishes reporting on the Huanghua Production Brigade proposal, Chang Zhenying shakes his head and says: "This method is out of the question..."

"Why?"

"My heart agrees with your doing things this way, but we cannot exceed policy limitations, and the provincial CPC Committee's Six Articles did not say we could do this either. If you really intend to do this, the whole complexion will change!"

Tang Maolin was stunned.

But, there was no other way. He wanted to do everything possible to do it, so he implored: "Suppose we try it out? What do you think?"

"All right...." Chang Zhenying said reluctantly.

After seeing Secretary Chang off, Tang Maolin convened an urgent meeting of the district CPC Committee, and to his surprise, its seven members unanimously agreed with the Huanghua Production Brigade method. Tang Maolin was a little excited. Following the meeting, too impatient to delay, he hurried off to Huanghua Production Brigade where he held a joint meeting of party and nonparty cadres where he announced the district CPC Committee's decision.

No sooner were the words out of his mouth that the overjoyed people at the meeting began to applaud.

4 17 September

The explosive decision set off explosive results. Among the peasants, this was like sweet dew after a long drought and in virtually a single night a craze for contracting production to individual households welled up. The land was classed as wetland, dryland, and hill land, and, within the short space of 2 days, 1,420 mu of the slightly more than 1,700 mu of land in the brigade, or more than two-thirds, was divided among the peasants for farming.

The "big uproar" system that frustrated us for many years began to totter almost in the twinkling of an eye!

5 18 September

The overjoyed Tang Maolin convened a meeting of the CPC Committee secretaries of three neighboring communes, and party branch secretaries from nine production brigades to promote the method used in Huanghua Production Brigade.

Speaking in the manner of soliciting opinions and conducting an exploration, Tang Maolin said: "The weather is so terribly dry. We certainly can't plant the wheat. What can we do? In Huanghua Production Brigade, we used the 'four fixed and one reward' responsibility being assigned to individuals. Do you think it will work? Do you approve it or not?"

He spoke extremely enthusiastically.

Again, surprisingly it passed unanimously.

6 19 September

A craze for contracting production to individual households on a larger scale swept the shores of the Fenge He.

7 20 September

Tang Maolin exulted too early!

Just when he was running all over promoting wide-area contracting of production to individual households, an anonymous letter signed "the masses" reached the hands of provincial CPC Committee first secretary Wan Li.

The wording of the letter was extremely caustic—"Tang Maolin is leading '100,000 people' in an effort to go all out regardless!"

"This is a 'replay' of the Liu Shaoqi line!"

"This is the 'lingering ghost' of Zeng Xisheng!"

Wan Li forwarded it to comrade Gu Zhuoxin [7357 058 72450], and Gu Zhuoxin forwarded it to Wang Guangyu [3769 0342 1342], who turned it over to the provincial agricultural committee for investigation and disposition. The provincial agricultural committee sent some people

to Feixi, from which they made the tiring journey to Shannan District in the company of leading comrades from the county agricultural committee.

The investigators and the investigated were very familiar with each other. Tang Maolin prepared a simple meal at home with a bottle of wine to welcome them upon their arrival. He felt it strange that they politely refused him

"We can't eat at your home!"

"Let's go to the mess hall..."

Tang Maolin was at a loss about what to do.

The investigators finally made their meaning clear: "We are investigating you!"

The chairman of the county agricultural committee signaled the comrades from the provincial agricultural committee not to talk, but the provincial agricultural committee comrades indignantly said: "What's to be afraid of? There's nothing to hide! I come from a village in Feixi, so I know how the peasants want contracting production to individual households..."

The views of the investigators and the investigated were identical.

Finally, the investigators preferred to eat at Tang Maolin's house.

Nevertheless, Tang Maolin was not only not entirely relieved, but rather he began to feel more heavyhearted.

8.27 September

Suddenly Tang Maolin received an urgent telephone call from Chang Zhenying: "Come to the county office right away."

In the conference room at the county CPC Committee guesthouse, a very distressed-looking Chang Zhenying warned: "Old Tang, there's a letter from 'the masses' that accuses you. It says you're urging 'going it alone in individual farming'!"

Tang Maolin retorted angrily: "We are not going it alone."

"What are you doing?"

"Responsibility fields!"

"Responsibility fields?"

"Yes, 'four fixeds and one reward, responsibility assigned to individuals!' I reported to you at Shannan."

His face still looking unhappy, Chang Zhenying said: "The method is a good one, but you had better not link it to output..."

This made Tang Maolin angry: "Secretary Chang, whether linked to output or not, we have already begun it in Shannan District! The Huanghua Production Brigade is applying it to more than 500 mu..."

"What's done is done!"

Chang Zhenying could do nothing, so he said with resignation: "Well, go ahead and do it!"

9.22 September

Tang Maolin "rebelled"

At a meeting of all commune CPC Committee secretaries in Shannan District, Tang Maolin made a straightforward speech filled with intense emotion: "A 'letter from the people' says we are engaged in 'retrogression,' and the secretary of the county CPC Committee will not permit 'linking to output.' He says compensation has to be linked to work points, which is really the same thing. Anyhow, the wheat has to be planted. The way Huanghua Production Brigade is doing it is...."

No one expressed opposition.

On this same day, good news reached the district: Sowing of wheat and more than 2,000 mu of rape in three communes had been completed.

10.5 October

In the 78 production brigades of the seven communes throughout the district, the planting of more than 20,000 mu of barley and 140,000 mu of wheat had also been completed.

11.2 February 1979

The chairman of the provincial agricultural committee, Zhou Yueji, led a survey team of 10 to Shannan to hear Tang Maolin's report. Zhou Yueji found a rare excitement. At Shannan, he saw the reflection of the current year, and he saw the light from the soil of the future.

Zhou Rih said approvingly: "This is the only way to do it!"

"I am very worried..."

"I'll do the worrying! 'Only noise, no substance' would not work. You keep on doing it this way!"

After returning to the provincial CPC Committee, Zhou Rih made a report on the method of contracting production to individual households used in Shannan District.

12 / February

An elder and a younger paternal cousin of Tang Maolin, together with a middle school teacher, traveled more than 20 li in a panic to locate Tang.

Tang Maolin was greatly surprised: "What did you come for?"

"To see you!"

"What is there to see about me?"

"There's a rumor in the production team that you..."

"Tang Maolin was suddenly frightened: "Saying what?"

"Broke the law! Have been arrested..."

13 // February

Today is Lantern Festival day.

On his way to Shannan, provincial CPC Committee secretary Wang Guangyu went to Cangdun Production Brigade in Sifen Commune in Changgang District, which was still practicing the "great uproar," where yields were low, and where increases were slow. All he saw was a barren expanse of fields devoid of human activity.

By chance, he came upon a commune member.

Secretary Wang asked: "How was the harvest last year?"

"Not so good!"

"What can be done?"

The way things are done in Shannan District is good!"

"Can't you do that?"

"The authorities won't let us do it!"

Wang Guangyu shook his head slowly and walked away despairingly.

As soon as he stepped into Liulaojia Production Brigade in Shannan Commune, there was a bustle of feverish activity. The peasants, who were contracting production to individual households, their sweat pouring like rain, were hauling manure from a pit to the wheatfields.

He asked: "It's the 15th of the first lunar month and you are still working?"

A commune member answered: "For food. Secretary Wang, by working this way we have food to eat, food to eat..." He said "food to eat" three times without stopping.

14 // May

A gentle breeze was blowing the luxuriantly green wheat and rape. An automobile passed through this fragrant expanse of fields and stopped at the gate to Shannan Commune. The door opened and out stepped provincial CPC Committee first secretary Wan Li.

He walked into the commune where Zhou Yueh introduced Wang Liheng [3769 4530 1854], who was coming forward, to Wan Li: "This is the Shannan Commune CPC Committee secretary..."

Wan Li shook hands and asked him: "Are you frightened?"

"A little..."

"Don't worry! I gave the nod for you to run a pilot project here..."

They walked into the conference room, and no sooner were they seated than Wan Li continued with the same topic, asking: "What are you afraid of?"

"We broke the tri-level ownership founded on production teams!"

"What else are you afraid of?"

"We're afraid about not unifying the 'five unifications'"

"That's a mistake. It's not your responsibility!" Wan Li declared decisively. Then, he reminded them: "However, the collective economy cannot be allowed to collapse!"

"We have concrete ways to take care of these problems."

"There may be disputes over water, fertilizer, plow oxen, and farm implements, with arguing and fighting and the destruction of publicly owned buildings, isn't that so?"

"We have clearly ruled: No transgression of collective interests!"

"Then, I'm relieved!" Wan Li said nodding his head.

After lunch, Wan Li went to Xiaoying Production Team in Guanxi Production Brigade. As soon as it heard that Secretary Wan was coming, the township and village filled with excitement! Even commune members working the fields in other villages threw down their farm implements and came running.

Wan Li spoke straight to the point: "What do you think about this way of working? Say anything you like, and ask anything you like..."

The first one to speak was Xiaojing Production Team accountant Li Zuzhong [2621 4371 1813]: "Secretary Wan, is it allowed to contract production to individual households?"

"Go to it. The provincial CPC Committee supports you!"

"We're a little afraid!"

"What are you afraid of?"

"That there'll be a change!"

"There won't be a change!"

"Contracting production to individual households is better than the 'big uproar.' If we keep doing it for a few years, we'll have food to eat!"

"Then you keep doing it for a few years!"

"Secretary Wan, can you give us a firm answer? Just how many years will we be able to do it?"

"You won't stop worrying?" Wan Li laughed. "Just do it this way! But you will have to protect the warehouses and the oxen sheds, and you'll have to take your turns using water. You cannot damage the collective economy! The purpose of contracting production to individual households is to increase output so the masses can have enough good food to eat. You just be sure to keep on working, and don't have ideological worries. I'll come see your harvest in the fall!"

Just then, Tang Maolin, drenched in sweat, came running. Someone had called him. Wan Li rose from his chair warmly and said: "All of you have done a good job!"

"Oh, we did wrong!"

Tang Maolin was prepared to receive criticism.

"No wrong!"

Wan Li spoke reassuringly.

Only then did Tang Maolin lift his head with full confidence.

Wan Li's visit to Shannan left behind a profound trust and ardent hopes. For those hesitant explorers, it was truly hard to forget.

15 Spring Flowers and Autumn Harvest

In 1979, Shannan District had an unprecedented bumper summer grain harvest. The gross output of the summer barley and wheat crops alone reached 20.1 million jin, a fourfold increase over 1978.

"Reorganize"

16 For nearly 150 years, ever since the advent of *The Communist Manifesto*, the spirit of communism has hovered over this planet. All his life, Marx called for the annihilation of private ownership to bring about prosperity for all mankind. He himself died in poverty and was buried in Highgate Cemetery in London. Since the birth of the Communist Party of China more than 60 years have also passed, during which countless Chinese Communist Party members have reddened the soil beneath our feet for the emancipation of the toiling masses.

One question that offers food for thought is why when the god of abundance finally arrived, we communists suddenly became convulsed with fear, not only not raising both hands to welcome the sunshine of hope, but rather replaying scene after tragic scene?

The "Gutsy Tang" whirlwind from Shannan District carried everything before it on the good earth of Feixi County. Dramatically changed realities were pressing the county CPC Committee for a declaration. It is difficult to be a leader on the eve of a major change.

Shannan became more and more prosperous. Despite the county CPC Committee's decision of "no publicity, no encouragement, and no promotion," the wind from Shannan traveled like wildfire, attracting people all over the county who intensely wanted contracting production to individual households.

"Support the courageous and starve the cowardly!"

"It is spreading too fast; it will really be impossible to keep it quiet!"

These two sentences expressed the contradictory state of mind of the masses and cadres at the time.

No matter what restrictions the county CPC Committee placed on contracting production to individual households, in July 1979 only 39 of the 1,006 production teams in Shannan District continued to work as production teams, 186 of them contracted production to teams, and an overwhelming majority contracted production to individual households. In addition, contracting production to individual households spread outside the district to other communes and production brigades. In the spring of 1979, only 23 percent of all production teams in Feixi County practiced contracting production to individual households, but during the summer fight against drought to do planting, the number shot up to 37 percent, and by fall it shot up again to more than 50 percent, becoming a huge and irresistible trend.

17 At that time, Feixi County was still under jurisdiction of Lu'an Prefecture whose CPC Committee was seriously split over contracting production to individual households, with the guiding ideology disapproving it.

From high up in the prefecture came heavy pressure, and from below came a fierce roar to agree, which higher authority would not allow, while the lower level would not asset to opposition. The Feixi County CPC Committee seemed to be sitting on a volcano. It might be dismissed by higher authority, or it might be toppled from below. As a first-level party organization, it could not be without a clear-cut attitude, but this simple word, "clear-cut," could be decisive here!

In the midst of all this confusion, the former county CPC Committee first secretary, Chang Zhenying, was transferred to a position in the prefecture, and the new first secretary of the county CPC Committee, Li Shangde [2621 1424 1795] went up to the provincial level for indoctrination, so the whole burden fell on the shoulders of Zhang Wenti [1729 2429 7344], the county CPC Committee deputy secretary and chairman of the county Revolutionary Committee.

I came to Feixi County twice. I did not meet Zhang Wenti the first time. When I went to contact him, he was meeting with guests from elsewhere. When I tried to contact him again, he was not in. When I paid a visit to the office of the chairman of the county People's Congress where he was now working, he happened to be away in Hefei. After traveling a long distance and making repeated efforts, I did not get my wish. Even the deputy director of the county CPC Committee propaganda department who accompanied me was annoyed—"Huh. He probably doesn't want to talk about this segment of history!"

Subsequently, at the county CPC Committee rural economic committee, I learned a story about him and that segment of history.

It is not easy to run away from history.

History was already written in the years of rural reform in Feixi County, and it was written on the length and breadth of the good earth of Feixi.

It is difficult to recall history, but to face up to history is 100 times harder.

At that time, China's rural villages were carrying out a fateful struggle and war of decision. Contracting production to individual households became the focal point of a controversy as to whether it was socialist or capitalist. One step forward could bring about a fundamental change in look of the countryside, and one step backward could bring the country to the verge of disaster again.

During this period, the county CPC standing committee frequently held sessions lasting late into the night, and were still unable to come to a decision. It discussed matters over and over again, without ever getting away from the "limitations" set by higher authority.

"Matters appeared better than they actually were." Shannan attracted the attention of the whole country, and reporters hurried there. But the county CPC Committee feared the leakage of information and seemed to be afraid to let the whole country know that a "deviant" model existed in Feixi. Even when the comrade in charge of the provincial agricultural committee, who was about to lose his position, came to Shannan to inspect the work, he was told that "without a letter of introduction, we cannot receive you!"

18 What made the county CPC Committee slip from anxiety into obstruction and from hesitation to containment were fights and disturbances over water and unrest resulting from the death and the butchering of oxen.

Because contracting production to individual households was spontaneous in nature and existed along with another system, virtually universal problems appeared very quickly—"Working oxen to death plowing the fields" was an increasingly serious problem. Plow oxen were overworked and sufficient fodder could not be obtained for them. During June, when Shannan Commune transplanted rice seedlings, three head of plow oxen died from overwork, and the commune members quickly sold them in the market. The year 1979 was the first year of great development of contracting production to individual households, and it was also the year in which the most beef went to market.

The commune and brigade collective economy was also threatened. Alongside the grain-drying ground at Shannan Commune were three sheds in which grain and farm implements were stored. When the production team was broken up, they were torn down. When the collective wanted to send people to work, it could find no one to go, and even holding meetings became a problem. The production team had to pay people to do emergency work to prevent wind damage, providing between 1.50 and 2 yuan, plus between 2 and 3 jin of grain, for each day worked.

Sensational stories about "heads broken in fights over water" appeared. Trouble over water and fights involving the use of firearms continued despite prohibitions. One village woman got into a quarrel over water, and when she saw that her fields could not be irrigated, she became extremely upset, finally killing herself by drinking pesticide.

The county CPC Committee was shocked!

Such turmoil could not be allowed to go on.

The collective economy could not be allowed to disintegrate!

Fights over water could not be allowed to turn into village enmities!

If this continued, it would be impossible to put things right!

It was such sudden and unforeseen damage that made the county CPC Committee sharply change its attitude and "rectifying deviation" gained the upper hand.

On 13 July 1979, when fights over water and the sale in markets of meat from dead oxen were at their height, the county CPC Committee convened a work conference at which Zhang Wenti once again proposed "no permitting contracting production to individual households," in a long speech that was issued as a formal county CPC Committee document.

This was Document Number 46, which rocked the whole county.

19 The whole county was in an uproar.

The circulation of Document 46 came as a tremendous shock to the 50 percent of rural villages in Feixi County who were contracting production to individual households. A shadow enveloped many communes and brigades in Feixi.

However, implementation of Document 46 did not achieve the anticipated results. Communes and brigades already contracting production to individual households remained indifferent, and communes and brigades that wanted to contract production to individual households still yearned to do so. The document remained virtually unimplemented. Except for arousing greater dissatisfaction, it had no effect.

The CPC County Committee documents bearing a heading printed in red repeatedly lost their effectiveness.

If one were to say that people had divergent views about Shannan during the previous period, now the main direction of conflict shifted to the county CPC Committee.

"Let us do it for 2 years!"

"Wait till we have food to eat; we can always go back together then!"

"We beg the county CPC Committee!"

"We beg you!"

Some communes and brigades rectified deviation forcibly. As a result, commune members simply refused to work, striking against farming and planting as a means of resistance. The peasant masses forced the county CPC Committee to reflect anew and make some new decisions.

20 Speaking about the situation at the time, Shi Dauzhou (2457 6670 0719), deputy chairman of the former county rural policy research office and, concurrently, chairman of the present agricultural committee, said: "After Document 46 was issued, there was a strong reaction. The county CPC Committee called on CPC Committees at all levels to put it into effect, enhancing the principle of party spirit whereby lower levels obey higher levels. But the grassroots cadres and masses refused to obey and some people lodged complaints with the provincial CPC Committee. The provincial CPC telephoned, asking the county CPC Committee secretary and the chairman of the Revolutionary Committee to go to the provincial level to give a report about Document 46."

"Wan Li asked: 'I heard you wanted to change contracting production to individual households?'"

"'We were worried!'"

"Wan Li criticized them severely: 'There was no publicity, no promotion, and no newspaper articles about contracting production to individual households; however, there was no need to antagonize the masses or no need to stifle the masses' initiative!'"

"The nub of this conversation was two 'no needs.' Subsequently, the provincial CPC Committee sent Secretary Wang Guangyu to Feixi where he formally relayed the views of the standing committee of the provincial CPC Committee. Although the county CPC Committee was forced to change its former methods, nevertheless, the problem of ideological perception was not fundamentally solved..."

Zhang Wenti was a genuine rural cadre. When transferred in 1978 to become deputy secretary of the Feixi County CPC Committee and, concurrently, chairman of the Revolutionary Committee, he was thoroughly versed in agriculture, and loved agriculture dearly, and for most of his life he had devoted his labor and his energy to the soil.

The second time I visited Feixi, I was determined to meet Zhang Wenti. He happened to be getting ready to go to Guanting District, so I hurried over.

"You see, I'm about to leave!"

"Let's talk for a little while, all right?"

"All right. For half an hour."

"In the spring of 1979 when the provincial agricultural committee started a pilot project in Shannan District for contracting production to individual households, it prescribed the principle of no publicity, and no promotion. At that time, we were thinking about contracting production to teams, though we did not oppose contracting production to individual households. Nevertheless, we felt that too big a step was being taken, and we had

linger fears... When Document 46 was drafted, the county CPC Committee secretary wrote the comment on it: "Doesn't mention contracting production to individual households. It is not true that I opposed contracting production to individual households. I simply had lingering fears. I was afraid of committing a line orientation error..."

The Plaintiff

2i One early morning not long after Document 46 was issued, a robust, 50-odd-year-old man came roaring in the door of the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee office on the south side of Chang Jiang Road in Hefei. He was Wang Xuezhou [3769 1331 3166], deputy secretary of the CPC Committee and chairman of the Revolutionary Committee in Ruidian Commune, Feixi County.

He had made a special trip to lodge a complaint with the county CPC Committee.

He represented not only himself but also the commune CPC Committee, all the peasants in the commune practicing the contracting of production to individual households, and the good earth across which the winds of change from Shannan were blowing.

Like Shannan, Ruidian was an impoverished area where grain output had not increased during all the 10 years between 1950 and 1960. When a bumper crop was harvested in 1961 as a result of contracting production to individual households, the masses were profoundly impressed. As a result, the provincial CPC Committee began a pilot project there in 1979 and Wang Xuezhou also began contracting production to individual households. Despite the district CPC Committee's refusal to approve, Wang Xuezhou persisted out of a sense of rectitude, gradually influencing the entire district.

Just when Ruidian Commune was rallying its forces in preparation to summarize the lessons of experience for further consolidation of the development of contracting production to individual households, county CPC Committee Document 46 suddenly struck like a bolt out of the blue.

A very agitated Wang Xuezhou made a special trip to the county CPC Committee to seek out Li Shangde [2651 1424 1795], the newly arrived county CPC Committee first secretary, to whom he said: "Only an extremely small number of production teams have competed with collectives for water and fertilizer. You cannot condemn contracting production to individual households across the board on that account. If contracting production to individual households is really not to be allowed, we won't contract wetlands, but only drylands..."

Li Shangde shook his head: "It's not that the county CPC Committee will not allow it; the prefecture CPC Committee will not allow it!"

At the county CPC Committee, he happened upon a leader from the prefecture garrison army whose support he was sure he could obtain. To his surprise, however, the man's attitude was even more intransigent: "None of this contracting production to individual households! There used to be a man (a large local landlord) in Feixi named Tang Jiawei [0781 1367 0962]. Why don't you change your name to Zhang Jiawei [1728 1367 0962] or Li Jiawei [2621 1467 0962]?"

"But the masses want it!"

"Out of the question. Act in the spirit of Document 46!"

Despite his entreaties, he was refused in the end. He returned dejectedly to Ruidian in a sulky mood.

There was a lot of wrangling over Document 46 at a meeting of the commune CPC Committee. The chief of the people's armed police approved the spirit of Document 46 in opposition to Wang Xuezhou. While visiting Tuolong Production Brigade to help improve work and gain firsthand experience, the chief of the people's armed police had been influenced by tragic scenes of "skull cracking in fights over water and the death of oxen from overwork in plowing." He said: "The county CPC Committee decision is correct; if things go on this way, the collective economy is bound to collapse..."

At the CPC Committee meeting Wang Xuezhou simply wanted to cry out, "As a party member, I believe the lower levels should submit to higher levels, but I cannot stand by helplessly and watch the loss of the summer grain crop!"

Meanwhile, difficulties were being created for Wang Xuezhou's wife and children in faraway Qingyang Village in Huagang Commune: "Your man is contracting production to individual households in Ruidian, so we will not issue you a grain ration!"

His wife complained tearfully to the district and to the commune, receiving the same rebuke: "Single-family farming stinks, and you can't make it smell any better. Besides, it is illegal. Chairman Mao led us for 30 years, but your man are going backwards!"

Those who blocked contracting production to individual households had a common terminology. They always mentioned "Chairman Mao," "restoration of the old order," and "regression." They always used fixed ideas to judge right and wrong. No matter whether contracting production to individual households was proved right or wrong in practice, it was as though there had been no discussion at all about the standing truth. This was the most conspicuous expression among rural cadres of the "two whatevers."

Wang Xuezhou was forced to the edge of a cliff.

He decided to go out of channels to make a report to the top. This was the sacred right of a Communist Party member. The commune CPC Committee members supported him: "Secretary Wang has stayed in our commune to help improve work and gain experience, so he is well informed. Go see him!"

Thus it was that he hurried to the provincial capital.

22 Secretary Wang Guangyu had gone to Anqing. Wang Xuezhou failed in his hope of seeing him. He was not upset. Since he had come, he would straighten matters out. He simply went into the office.

After listening to his presentation, those who received him shook their heads: "We cannot reply on this matter!"

Next he went to the agricultural committee.

This time he hit it right! He met Zhou Yueli.

Filled with anger, he presented Document 46 from the Feixi County CPC Committee, and made a detailed report on the tremendous changes that had taken place in Ruidian Commune after 1 year of contracting production to individual households.

Zhou Yueli handed him a survey report that Wan Li had just approved, which showed a doubling of grain yields through contracting production to individual households in Xiangyang Production Team in Shannan District.

Wan Li had written: "I think we can do things this way!"

"It would be better if you issued a document!" Wang Xuezhou sought protection from a document.

"Today the entire country is engaged in a great discussion of 'practice being the sole standard for testing truth.' That you have genuinely increased yields demonstrates that contracting production to individual households is correct. Why not permit it?"

"Higher authority will not permit it!"

"That's not right! Wan Li approved it, and the provincial CPC Committee decided in favor of it, so we should be able to do it!"

Wang Xuezhou had not made his trip in vain. He had a firm plan in mind and he said with deep feeling: "I'll return home and keep on with it! But after Secretary Wan gets back, please have him come to Feixi County..."

"I'll report your request..."

Three days later, Secretary Wang Guangyu made a special trip to Feixi, where he remonstrated with the county CPC Committee leaders. "When conditions are

ripe, success will come. Let the masses do things themselves. Even if Feixi makes a mistake, it's just one county, isn't it? The provincial CPC Committee knows about it!"

Wang Guangyu also received Wang Xuezhou, whom he encouraged by saying, "I have talked to the county CPC Committee about letting you do this, go ahead with 'contracting to individual households'..."

Wang Xuezhou returned to Ruidian Commune, his face beaming with satisfaction.

It was not just the masses of people who supported contracting to individual households, but also a number of our Communist Party members, such as Tang Maojin and Wang Xuezhou. They were a powerful force that formed a nucleus for the transformation of China's rural villages.

Pressures, From...

23 The Shannan District CPC Committee did not let up because of the bumper harvest, nor did provincial CPC Committee support change the sneers of the onlookers.

During late April, an old leading army cadre who had done many grueling things in his life met Tang Maojin. In the tone of a parent admonishing a child and of a general dressing down troops, he rebuked him, saying "You people in Shannan are 'turning back the clock'!"

"We are not 'turning the clock back'!"

"What do you mean you're not?"

"We have a responsibility system..."

"What responsibility system? Chairman Mao lead us from land reform to mutual aid teams, to elementary agricultural producer's cooperatives, to advanced agricultural producer's cooperatives, but you insist on 'individual farming'..."

The pressures on Tang Maojin suddenly increased again.

He kept asking himself: "If even military leaders have this attitude, is it possible that contracting to individual households is really wrong?"

He convened the district CPC Committee.

By coincidence, Wang Guangyu had come to Shannan on an inspection, and when he saw the conference room was full, he asked: "What is being discussed?"

"It's still whether to do it or not..."

"What are you afraid of? Secretary Wang supports you, and a majority of the Standing Committee of the provincial CPC Committee supports you..."

"Secretary Wang..." Tang Maolin's voice quivered. "I'm preparing to go to jail..."

"It's not that serious!"

In September, the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee's Document No 29 formally forwarded the Fengyang County CPC Committee's 1-year experiences in "large-scale assignment of responsibilities." For Feixi County, it was as bad as a "heavy bomb." The general trend was irreversible. Under new circumstances, the county CPC Committee began to change its attitude, changing "contracting production to teams" to "contracting fields to individual households, and water pumps to teams," and to establish new models in the Leima Commune pilot project.

24 In October, a deputy minister from the State Council, in a party totaling three people, made the long trip to Shannan.

This deputy minister's purpose remains a mystery to this day in the minds of the cadres and masses of Shannan District. He seemed to be uninterested in the unprecedented bumper harvest, brushed aside a survey of needy households lacking workers that the district CPC Committee had specially chosen, and collected "negative data" on nine problems with contracting production to individual households.

A shadow was cast from the top.

A confrontation began.

The deputy minister laid his cards on the table before Tang Maolin without mincing words: "What are you talking about, 'responsibility fields'? This is 'contracting production to individual households'!"

Tang Maolin listened with respectful attention.

"There is indeed increased output, but there are very many faults. It cannot solve the production team's real problems. The character has changed. There are water problems, the problem of the dependents of martyrs and members of the armed forces, and the problem of needy households is very glaring. If this goes on, the collective economy will become weaker and weaker..."

This was the deputy minister's judgment of Shannan's method of contracting production to individual households.

Tang Maolin refused to give in. He went to complain to a department head who had come along. "You just look for problems where there are shortcomings; you don't talk about the important matter of a bumper harvest. What is needed to convince you?"

The department head dodged the question. "Go talk directly with the minister!"

That evening, Tang Maolin strode into the place where the deputy minister was staying. Facing a national deputy minister, the CPC Committee secretary of an out-of-the way district in a poor township stirringly and candidly expressed his own views. "Minister, you admitted that objectively speaking Shannan District's practice with responsibility fields during the past 2 years is 'not bad.' In essence, I have some complaints to make."

"What complaints?" the deputy minister said testily.

"The materials you collected show only one side. They don't represent the whole picture. I have always worked in rural villages, and I have tasted the sour, the sweet, the bitter, and the hot. After so many years, people's communes have yet to solve the food problem, but in the short space of just 2 years of responsibility fields, it has been solved. You talk about 'dead mules and dead oxen.' Such things also happened before we had responsibility fields. You talk about 'quarrels about the water supply' and we also had that before. You can't blame it all on responsibility fields. We didn't have responsibility fields in 1975, but a fight over water and fertilizer took place on top of the dam, endangering several people's lives. After responsibility fields, no production team fought on the dam. As for the households enjoying the five guarantees [childless and infirm old persons who are guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing, and burial expenses by people's communes], and needy households we see to it that they have work points. Each person gets as much as 700-odd jin of grain each month. You talk only about shortcomings, and that just cannot be justified..."

The atmosphere in the rustic room was extremely tense and seemed about to explode at any moment.

Finally, the deputy minister grimaced and said, "All right! I'm leaving tomorrow for Huanqiu. If you have any matters, talk them over with the department head!"

He again pushed the contradictions off on the department head.

What good did it do for Tang Maolin to talk? The pressures on an innovator are not only from the fetters of thousands of years of poverty, but also from the shackles of ultraleftist thinking. Breaking out of this artificial confinement to move ahead seemed virtually impossible.

"I Ask You Six Questions..."

25 On 13 December 1979, just 18 days before the arrival of the 1980's, Wan Li made a special trip to Shannan.

He had promised to come see the harvest.

In contrast with the previous occasion, however, this time no trace of a smile appeared on his face with the slightly protruding cheekbones. Instead, he gazed with a somber expression at the boundless expanse of fields through a pair of solemn eyes.

People envied the provincial CPC Committee first secretary's celebrated authority, little knowing that he too was being "attacked front and rear."

That there were pressures from the top goes without saying, and he also had to withstand obstructions from below, not to mention savage infighting within provincial party, government, and military organizations. These three different forces encircled Wan Li, and our provincial CPC Committee first secretary served as the target for their "bombardment."

In Shannan District, contracting production to individual households produced a social upheaval. One argument after another among local cadres had been toppled, but the "artillery fire" of the garrison forces was extraordinarily fierce!

During this period, the garrison forces were holding a party congress during which some comrades posed questions, one after another, to the provincial CPC Committee first secretary, who was attending the congress:

"The families of most cadres and soldiers in the armed forces are in rural villages. If contracting production to individual households is done by all of them, and their minds are gripped by the land, who will become soldiers? Who will lead the troops? Won't everyone want to return home to farm?"

"Soldiers' morale will be shaken, so defenses will be shaky!"

"This is a question of principle having to do with the building of national defense!"

Wan Li simply listened, neither explaining nor answering, but he devoted extremely careful attention to these queries from comrades in the armed forces. After the congress, he came to Shannan, his head filled with questions. He had questions to ask of the cadres and masses here, to ask about the recently harvested fields, and about the new life just begun...

26 As soon as he sat down, he got right to the point without beating about the bush, asking Tang Maolin questions raised in the armed forces party congress and by society at large.

Wan: This time, I would like to ask you to answer six questions for me!

Tang: Go right ahead and ask them, Secretary Wan.

Wan: Comrades in the armed forces report that you, Tang Maolin, are "disturbing military morale," and "destroying our defenses" by practicing contracting production to individual households in Shannan District. How do you reply?

Tang (Calmly) Such fears are needless! Shannan District has 14 people in the armed services to whom the district CPC Committee has sent letters individually with news about harvesting a bumper crop after contracting production to individual households. It also told them that their families have "responsibility fields," that they are very well looked after, that they receive bonuses for overfulfilling quotas and are fined for falling short of quotas, that they get special consideration on work points, and that the district honors the amounts to be distributed. Ordinary needy households get 1,000 work points as a special consideration; in addition, the families of military personnel and martyrs receive between 150 and 200 yuan in cash each year..."

Wan: So, you are not "disturbing military morale" and "destroying our defenses." Instead you are strengthening national defense!

Tang: Yes!

Wan: I'll ask you the second question: Workers at Hefei Steel (Hefei Steel and Iron Works) do not go to work, but want to return home to farm. What do you think should be done?

Tang: This is not the situation either! In Liulaojia Production Brigade there is a Hefei steelworker dependent named Xiong Zuhua [3574 4371 5478] and four small children. Before contracting production to individual households, the family's annual income was about 150 yuan. After contracting production to individual households, the family's basic grain ration was 420 jin plus another 1,650 jin for overfulfillment of quota. The family also raised a hog weighing more than 200 jin and seven chickens. It used to overspend every year, but this year life was easier, and it did not overspend...

Wan: That means the workers did not want to return home, but that the family had double wages!

Tang: Yes. The same thing as double wages!

Wan: I'll ask you the third question: No one looks after the families of martyrs and military personnel or the households enjoying the five guarantees [childless and infirm old persons who are guaranteed food, clothing, medical care, housing, and burial expenses by the people's commune]. What can be done to solve this problem?

Tang: It is not true that no one is looking after them; they are better cared for than they used to be! We ran a pilot project in Jinniu Commune: Every household enjoying the five guarantees receiving a grain ration of 700 jin and

1,000 jin of rice straw each year. It also received 5 jin of cooking oil. Their whole livelihood was taken care of, and they were also given 30 yuan in cash for spending money. This is being promoted throughout the district. This is much better for the families of martyrs and military personnel than during the "great uproar" period. At that time, the value of labor was very low, no more than 25 yuan per year. Now it is between 4 and 5 times again as much...

Wan: I'll ask you the fourth question: Might there be any damage done to water conservancy facilities?

Tang: During the former large collective period, people also competed for water and fertilizer. After contracting production to individual households, three peasant households in Liqiao Production Brigade were found to have fought over water. Later on, when water pond rights were defined, things settled down. The key is leadership. Specific people should be designated as being responsible for managing large ponds, for water conservancy facilities being in operating condition...

Wan: Let me ask you the fifth question. How do you look after plow oxen and farm equipment?

Tang: Individual households are designated responsible for taking care of oxen, plows, and harrows. In case of loss, they must pay an indemnity at a centrally set price. During the "great uproar" period, production teams were supposed to take care of them, but actually no one took care of them. With individual households being responsible, care is better than at that time, and the sense of responsibility is also much stronger...

Wan: And now, the final question: Will poor teams contracting production to individual households be able to obtain great results this year?

Tang: Yes!

Wan: Give an example!

Tang: After Wawu Production Team in Guangdong Production Brigade contracted production to individual households, the head of the production team, Wei Xianzhu [5898 0341 2691], produced more than 20,000 jin of grain.

Tang Maolin's answers banished the dark doubts that had gripped Wan Li's heart, and his somber demeanor disappeared, to be replaced by the ease and the smile of one from whom a burden has been lifted.

He stood up, his body rising like a mountaintop, and headed outside, calling out to Tang Maolin: "All right, let's go see your threshing ground!"

Chapter 5. From Xiyang To Fengyang—Xiaogang: 18 Bright Red Fingerprints

"It Was Like a Novel; I Read It Twice!"

I Hefei is a totem city for the Chang Jiang and the Huai He in which a ceaseless surge of people flows all day long along Chang Jiang Road and Huai He Road like alternatively rising and falling waves. At a bend in the Huai is an islet named Daoxianglou, a bower of multicolored flowers where orioles sing and swallows dart. During the reign of Yongle in the Ming Dynasty, it was reportedly an official's garden, which later decayed into a barren hill. When Zeng Xisheng was first secretary of the provincial CPC Committee, he took a fancy to this "place of fine geomancy." In 1954 he chose it as a site, and in 1956 began work on the building here of a uniquely styled guesthouse.

At a fork in the road near this guesthouse, an old-fashioned single-story house stood among two luxuriantly green-leaved clumps of hydrangea.

Wan Li lived here temporarily.

Late at night on 10 January 1980, when the whole city was already sleeping contentedly, a light still burned in the single-story Xiyuan House. There, Wan Li was sitting at a desk, zestfully reading a survey report on Xiaogang Production Team in Liyuan Commune titled "An Indispensable Tonic," which the Fengyang County CPC Committee had sent him.

Though not written by a professional writer, the report possessed a realism and a dynamism such as a professional writer might find difficult to attain.

2 Xiaogang Production Team was formerly a village located on a small hill. Before cooperativization, it had a population of 175 in 34 households, 30 head of cattle, and 110 mu of cultivated land, from which the gross output of grain for the whole village ranged between 180,000 and 190,000 jin per year. In a good year, the harvest might reach more than 200,000 jin. At that time, no one ever left the village. The people looked with disdain on those who left to go begging elsewhere.

During the formation of elementary producers' cooperatives in 1955, this village formed no cooperatives, but, in 1956, it formed advanced producers' cooperatives. Commissioner Huang, who had worked on the organization of the cooperatives, said: "You are going to enter 'paradise' in a single step! The first year after cooperatives were formed, the harvest was still pretty good, 315,000 jin of grain being harvested by the entire production team, an average of 600 jin per person. After withholding some grain as seeds, the remaining 40,000 jin was sold to the state. This was the first time since the cooperativization of Xiaogang and also the last time for the next 20 to 30 years that Xiaogang contributed grain to the country. In 1957, when an expansion of the antirightist campaign returned

to Xiaogang Production Team, anyone who said the word "no" in discussions about the superiority of the system, no matter whether a poor peasant or a tenant peasant, would suffer mass criticism or be labeled "antisocialist." From that time forward, silence reigned on political matters and whatever higher authority said should be done was done. In the winter of that year, Xiaogang Production Team began to issue ration coupons.

During the following several years, thanks to the increasing severity of the "Five Styles" campaign, productivity was seriously damaged. By 1960, only 39 people, living in 10 households, and one ox remained in Xiaogang to farm slightly more than 100 mu. During a 3-year period, 60 people died from abnormal causes (starvation), six households were wiped out, and 76 people left the village to find a way to make a living elsewhere. At that time, the entire village was a scene of desolation, weeds growing in profusion everywhere. Even today, many people shudder at the memory of it, simply not daring to believe that slightly more than 10 years after we seized political power such a tragic situation could occur.

By 1961, when the winds of responsibility fields, contracting production to individual households, which commune members called "lifesaving fields," and which officials criticized as "fields for the restoration of the old order," reached Xiaogang, they were already a spent force. Even so, commune members still grew wheat on "responsibility fields." After planting was done, higher authorities were determined to "rectify the responsibility fields." When the crop was harvested, another "great assessment" was made. The peasants then took to looting and stealing, with the result that only 965 jin were harvested, and 2,400 jin of seeds that had not been planted were also gone. Each person in the production team received 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ jin from the harvest, the remaining 900 jin being kept as seeds. From this time onward Xiaogang came to be known as the place where "20 (jin) is planted and 18 (jin) harvested," and where "harvesting can be done by hand without need for a sickle." During the next several years, things improved slightly, and just as the production team was about to raise its head, the Great Cultural Revolution swept through Xiaogang in 1966.

3 How did these backward places manage? Before the smashing of the gang of four, few people bothered to understand them or study them, and leaders rarely paid any attention to them. It has only been in recent years that "Beijing" and "Volga" automobiles and vans have been seen in front of private homes in Xiaogang Production Team. The first time some small children saw automobiles raising smoke and dust on the roads, they were frightened out of their wits.

This spring, in the process of carrying into effect the spirit of the 3d Plenary Session decisions and the two CPC Central Committee documents pertaining to the development of agriculture, the county CPC Committee acted according to the demands of the masses and proceeded from realities to pursue a led, step-by-step production

responsibility system of "large-scale work contracting" throughout the county. Initially, this production team of 115 people in 20 households was divided up into four job teams. This did not work, so a revision was made into eight job teams. This still did not work. In this place where people had fought furiously, even two or three households clashed with each other. Later on, the commune members instituted contracting production to individual households "on the sly."

The commune felt that this production team was hard to deal with, and somewhat "disgruntled."

The principal leading comrade in the county CPC Committee, who had worked in rural villages for decades and who had experienced all kinds of adversity, knew the party's "rules" very well, and even more sympathized with the masses' hardships with regard to this matter. He thought that if one of the more than 300 production teams in the county practiced contracting production to individual households, even if it were a "restoration of the old order," it didn't make a great deal of difference. Consequently, he told comrades in the commune: "Forget it. Let them do it that way!" So it was that contracting production to individual households continued in Xiaogang Production Team.

And how did the situation turn out in practice? This year the production team's gross output of grain was 132,370 jin, an amount equal to the sum of grain output for the 5-year period 1966 through 1970. Output of oil-bearing crops was 20,200 jin and 133 hogs were raised, an all-time annual high. This year requisition procurement of grain was 3,800 jin more than quota. During the previous 2 or 3 years, the team had not provided the state with a single kernel of grain and had depended year after year on the state to provide grain for consumption. This year, however, it sold the state 24,955 jin in a more than 700-percent overfulfillment.

Contracting production to individual households was truly an indispensable "tonic" to Xiaogang. Their only wish was that they be allowed to go on this way. In 3 to 5 years, they could make a little contribution to the country and accumulate a little money individually for use in building houses and purchasing some furniture. They could use their own hard labor to change backward conditions here.

4 Xiaogang Production team's contracting production to individual households was done "on the sly," and for a year no one from the CPC Committee went to critique it, much less publicize it. When data were collated in the county CPC Committee, when the Xiaogang example happened to come to notice, it was carefully deleted. Nevertheless, information about the situation there spread very rapidly to certain places, particularly to impoverished places. Some people termed this spread an "attraction," others termed it an "influence." Production teams in Liyuan Commune, which had conditions similar to those in Xiaogang, became centers for public discussion. "The

government is the same, but Xiaogang can do it, so why can't we?" Despite the commune's repeated injunctions and tough talk about not permitting contracting production to individual households, this fall some places adopted the practice of "deceiving those above, but not deceiving those below." In a single night, the masses divided up the fields and the oxen, and when the cocks crowed, they went to the fields to plant wheat.

When this happened, some cadres began to grumble about Xiaogang. They said that it was as all because of the "influence" of Xiaogang. Were it not for Xiaogang, there wouldn't be any trouble here. That Xiaogang was influencing some places was a fact. Nevertheless, Xiaogang had never advertised itself, much less did it have the authority to issue orders to others. Why was it that Xiaogang could attract so many places, while the very many other places were unable to "influence" Xiaogang? The best answer to this question may be found in an event that occurred in Xiaogang previously. In 1974, the commune decided to change the backward circumstances in Xiaogang. The commune secretary took charge, and the people's public security section head directed the day-to-day tasks. A column of 18 people entered Xiaogang and stationed themselves there. (At the time, Xiaogang had only 19 households.) At a mobilization meeting, one of the people in charge said: "You people here in Xiaogang will not be able to continue to take the capitalist road. Today, we will lead you by the nose with our left hands while we hold the proletarian knife, the proletarian rifle, and the proletarian whip in our right hand. We are determined to drive you to the road of socialism!" The 18 people maneuvered about and stirred up the masses, "driving for 1 year." The result was that Xiaogang's grain supply, which was very little to begin with, declined even further.

Xiaogang Production Team's contracting production to individual households remains a "target for mass criticism." Even though people have to admit that this method is better able than any other form of responsibility system to arouse the initiative of the masses in places that have been backward for a long time, and better able to increase output...

Xiaogang's methods were attracting others, which made Xiaogang feel proud. This attraction of others brought trouble. If it were itself unable to continue, that would cause unspeakable sadness. This caused Xiaogang to produce a new contradictory mentality...

5 The survey report from the land of the beggar. Wan Li so much that he could not sleep. Leaving the outflow of people from villages had always been the problem that concerned Wan Li most, and that had given him the most headaches since assuming his position in Anhui. Contracting production to individual households was the realization of his desires. This could not but make him extraordinarily pleased. His heartstrings were completely entwined with Xiaogang's destiny...

As he turned the final page, all thought of sleep vanished and he could not help pace back and forth in the room.

It was well into the night...

The hour was late...

He returned to the desk with agitation, and began to read from the beginning...

As dawn broke, Wan Li walked out to the steps at the entrance to Xiyuan House where he encountered Chen Tingyuan [7115 1656 0337], first secretary of the Fengyang County CPC Committee, who had come to a meeting.

Too impatient to wait, Wan Li told Chen Tingyuan: "The data from Xiaogang are very good! It was as though I was reading a novel; I read it twice without stopping..."

"Document Number 1"

6 Before proceeding to relate how the Xiaogang story unfolded, let us first trace the birth of the "large-scale assignment of responsibilities" with contracting of output to teams as the responsibility system used in Fengyang. Fengyang's "large-scale assignment of responsibilities" originated in Mahu Commune where there lived another courageous secretary like Tang Maolin in the Shannan District of Feixi County. He was a huge man named Zhan Shaozhou [6124 4801 0719].

Comrades from the county CPC Committee who visited Fengyang told me his story many times.

I would very much like to meet him.

Today he is the director of the county communications bureau; where he is very busy running here and there. During the day, he really has no time at all.

During the evening, he knocked on my door.

Outgoing and hearty, we hit it off at once and passed two nights together without sleeping. In a thick local accent, he described to me five springtimes, which, though they are gone, will never be forgotten...

7 The Spring of 1972

When this old party member, who had joined the party in 1955, came to Mahu Commune to become secretary of the CPC Committee, it was the time of a spring famine when there was neither food nor fuel.

During the short, 4-month period from February to June, the commune's 4,800 people consumed 320,000 jin of grain bought back from the state. They were virtually dependent on state relief to meet their minimum needs. As a result of disturbances and disaster, the popular mood was mercurial. Commune members

resented cadres and cadres resented commune members. With all the resentment back and forth, people became hardened with resentment. From this time onward, Mahu became a sea of hunger.

"Zhan Shaozhou could not sit still. At a meeting of production team heads, his anger flared up: "Why can people get food to eat without working hard for it?"

"Secretary Zhan, You're blowing up before investigating and studying! Who has food to eat, but doesn't want to produce? People's bellies are so hungry they can't stand it!"

He had intended to rouse the cadres to action, never supposing that he would end up having the cadres criticize him. He turned his head to see who was speaking, discovering it was Jin Huaier [6855 3232 0059], a production team leader about his own age. This really astounded him, and he considered hitting back with a few sentences, but did not want to add fuel to the fire. After thinking it over, he said nothing more.

The meeting broke up in discord.

How to get through the spring famine?

Heads bursting!

Wracked with despair!

Most perplexing is the grain problem. "The rollers are waiting and ready to go. The masses want to eat and the country needs grain." No way can be found no matter the amount of thinking. Zhan Shaozhou is so worried, he has no appetite during the daytime and cannot sleep at night.

The result is that the enthusiasm of the masses cannot be aroused this year. They have no desire to plant the fields, no desire to weed them, no desire to reclaim land, and grain yields continue to drop...

8 The Spring of 1973

Another spring famine!

Zhan Shaozhou cudgels his brains and decides to calculate work points on the basis of work done.

People were much more confused than he had expected. At one mass meeting, Zhan Shaozhou almost cursed people in public. "How can you be so damned dumb? Nothing to eat, and no place to live, yet you talk about rules and formulate systems. From now on, anyone who is one step late in getting to work in the fields is going to get it!"

No sooner were the words out of his mouth than a sallow and wizened short, middle-age woman sitting beside him spoke up, saying sadly: "Secretary Zhan, don't you know, this production team has not dug in the fields for 11 years..."

Ever since 1961, when contracting production to individual households came to a premature end, until the present time, this production team had never really cultivated fields; it grew crops on virtually unplowed land.

Zhan Shaozhou said with astonishment: "How do you remember so clearly?"

"I married into this village 11 years ago..."

In order to bring to an end the recitation about the "unplowed fields," Zhan Shaozhou declared: "Work points on the basis of work done. Anyone who is absent without cause and whoever fools around has work points deducted as punishment."

Calculating work points on the basis of work done did not produce the anticipated results. The work evaluation ledger showed only work points added, but none taken away. In order not to offend and to avoid ridicule, even those for whom work points were added did not want them. Once, when a woman commune member was docked two points for loafing on the job, she attacked the work evaluation team, kicking and cursing them with a mouth full of dirty words, causing disbandment of the system for calculating work points on the basis of work done...

9 The Spring of 1974

"Contract labor!"

Zhan Shaozhou had learned two lessons, and now he was "cold-blooded." He divided up the production team into four job teams. Not daring to contract the growing of staple grain crops, he contracted the production of tobacco. For every jin of tobacco, one work point worth 0.50 yuan was recorded. The masses supported this method rather well, and their enthusiasm suddenly rose.

But sorrow follows joy.

A party line education study class had been set up in the district, but Zhan Shaozhou had not attended because of the press of daily work. The district criticized him by name, saying his methods posed "problems in line orientation," and ordered him to rectify them.

Upon hearing this, the production brigade party branch secretary became impatient, and early in the morning of the following day, he came to see Zhan Shaozhou, filled with anxiety.

"Secretary Zhan. You're in big trouble! The district named you yesterday!"

Zhan Shaozhou's heart pounded, but he said: "Can I let all of you ruin what I have let you do?"

"They may try to bring you down, criticize..."

"Let them try to bring me down!" Zhan Shaozhou said somewhat angrily.

"If they bring you down, I'll stand by you!"

He was touched at finding that the production brigade secretary was willing to "accompany him to the execution ground."

He set out at once for the district training class to assume responsibility—

10 The Spring of 1975

Although he no longer dared flagrantly practice tobacco contracting, the chastened Zhan Shaozhou's heart was still closely tied to the masses who wanted to continue the practice.

Of the eight production teams that had originally practiced "tobacco contracting," six had been forced to abandon the practice by higher authority, so only two remained.

The leaders of these two production teams were also a little nervous, so they came to sound out Zhan Shaozhou.

"Secretary Zhan, can the growing of tobacco still be contracted?"

"That would be a deliberate violation!" Zhan Shaozhou purposely assumed a serious expression.

"We wouldn't blame it on you!" the production team leaders said quietly.

"Do as you please!"

At spring planting time, the two "do as you please" production teams contracted tobacco production "on the sly," harvesting an uncommonly large bumper crop in the fall.

11 The Spring of 1978

The county authorities wanted Qianni Production team to fulfill a 60,000-jin grain quota. This was no small figure! To expect a production team that in most years lived off grain repurchased from the state to provide so much grain in a single year was clearly impossible.

Zhan Shaozhou worried again.

He sought out the production team leader for a talk, and the production team leader proposed a bold idea that even Zhan Shaozhou did not expect: "If grain were to continue to be contracted like tobacco, not just 60,000 jin, but an additional 10,000-jin quota could be fulfilled..."

"Could it really be fulfilled?"

"Guarantee it!"

"If you can overfulfill production, we'll contract it!"

Clearly, Zhan Shaozhou was dazzled by the production team leader's promise.

After studying the matter, he began to worry.

The memory of his former criticism still resounded in his ears. He had to be careful about what he did. Finally he decided that the soil for growing all agricultural crops that need not be rolled would be contracted.

He counted the number on his fingers. Crops like sweet potatoes, corn, and peanuts can be grown without using rollers. They took up 60 percent of the land. But the masses were still dissatisfied with this. Not only did they want to contract land for legume crops, but for growing fiber crops as well. If these were figured in, they would take up 95 percent of the land. The only crop left was paddy rice.

Within just a few days, the land was divided up and plow oxen and farm implements were also divided up. During spring planting, a middle-age woman who had divorced her husband spent 300 yuan of her alimony payment to buy chemical fertilizer to put on her own contract field.

When Chen Tingyuan [7115 1656 0337], county CPC Committee first secretary, came to Mahu, Zhan Shaozhou reported only on the status of "contracting production to teams and figuring compensation on the basis of output" of a single production team. Chen Tingyuan muttered to himself for a moment, nodded his head, and said: "I think you can go ahead so long as it increases output!"

When Zhan Shaozhou saw that the county CPC Committee secretary not only did not oppose, but even warmly supported, the measures, he became even bolder. With this, the masses became more exuberant, transforming the original eight production teams into 28 operational teams. This meant, in fact, that the entire Luxi Production Brigade was engaged in contracting production to individual households and figuring compensation on the basis of output.

Zhan Shaozhou had never anticipated that events would move so fast, and he was a little worried. At dusk, he hurried over to the county seat, where he headed straight for Chen Tingyuan's house.

"Have you eaten?"

"No."

Chen Tingyuan had his wife boil some noodles, and then asked Zhan Shaozhou: "What brought you here?"

"To report to you!"

"Report what?"

"It has begun. More is being done..."

Chen Tingyuan was dumbstruck. He smoked one cigarette after another.

Uneasily, Zhan Shaozhou said quietly: "Secretary Chen. This is a good way! Only good and no bad can come from this method..."

Chen Tingyuan continued smoking. Only after another cigarette had burned back to his fingers did he snuff it out in the ashtray, gesture, and say: "You have begun to do it, so that's that! In 1960 when things were so serious all over the province, not all the 'responsibility fields' were rectified either."

As a result of the county CPC Committee secretary's further loosening up, a new upsurge occurred in contracting production to teams in Mahu Commune. By the time of the wheat harvest, it had spread to 38 production teams.

Just when Zhan Shaozhou was all set to promote Qianji Production Team's experiences, from out of the blazing sky a thunderclap sounded that made people feel very anxious...

Criticisms of contracting production to teams came in from all directions.

All of a sudden, Mahu Commune could not longer hold out. Zhan Shaozhou's vision became hazy; he felt dizzy; and he had no strength. He returned home to recuperate.

At noon on the following day, the head of the Qianji Production Team came panting and puffing: "Secretary Zhan, hurry back!"

"What for?"

"Commune members are saying all kinds of things. No one is working and production can't go on. They are waiting for you!"

Zhan Shaozhou said nothing.

"You have to go whether you want to or not!" The production team leader was on the verge of tears. "If you get in hot water because we're trying to grow something to eat, move to Qianji. Our production team will take care of you..."

Two sets of teary eyes looked at each other earnestly.

Zhan Shaozhou returned to the commune. As soon as he entered the door, he notified the commune broadcaster: "Inform the whole commune that an urgent meeting is to be broadcast at 6 o'clock tonight!"

Possibly because it was about a matter of life and death, every slope and bank under a loudspeaker throughout the commune was filled with standing people before 6 o'clock. They wanted to hear just what kind of hopeful statement Secretary Zhan would make after having been criticized.

The broadcast began on time!

"Here in Mahu Commune, our production management method of dividing up into work teams, contracting production to teams, and calculating work points on the basis of output, giving bonuses for overfulfillment, and levying penalties for underfulfillment is pretty good! Article 31 of the Six Articles is about work groups. It permits a division of plow oxen and dividing up into teams. Article 32 has to do with figuring work points on the basis of work. Our contracting of tobacco production to teams best embodies the principle of 'from each according to ability, to each according to work' that Marx talked about. An article in the 30 May issue of RENMIN RIBAO titled, 'A County CPC Document That the Masses Greatly Welcome,' also was in favor of figuring work points on the basis of output. Huainan Coal Mine is also figuring wages on the basis of coal output. This is the basis for and the background of our doing things this way, and there is nothing wrong with it! If, by some chance, there is anything wrong with it, I'll take the blame!"

Jubilation swept the audience from top to bottom. He had calmed the masses' fears.

But who would calm his own fears?

He spent several days in a row going through materials looking for arguments. Finally he wrote a letter to the authorities concerned. In it, he set forth the rationale for responsibility linked to output, providing for a "division into job teams and figuring work points on the basis of work." He set out at once to deliver it to the district authorities.

Halfway there, he ran into the district CPC Committee secretary, He De [0149 1795]. He De read it. His two hands trembling, he said: "Shaozhou, What use is there for you to write this letter! You're an able person. Sent it to Deng Xiaoping..."

Comrade Xiaoping had just been rehabilitated. Very likely he was not in a most secure situation as well. As he thought about this, Zhan Shaozhou decided to go ahead and do it.

12 The situation at Mahu Commune aroused the concern of the provincial CPC Committee. Zhou Yueh made a special trip to Mahu and prepared a survey report titled, "A Good Way To Strengthen Production Responsibility Systems," more than 100 copies of which were distributed at a national people's commune administration and management seminar held at Suzhou in Jiangsu Province. It became a news item that attracted attention.

Subsequently, comrades from the State Council Rural Policy Research Office arrived in Anhui. Rather interested in the methods used at Mahu, they invited Zhan Shaozhou to go to Hefei for a talk during which they provided warm endorsement and encouragement.

The 4th Cadres Conference convened by the Fengyang County CPC Committee in January 1979 had Mahu Commune provide a briefing on experiences in large-scale contracting of work responsibilities.

Zhan Shaozhou strode swiftly to the rostrum, held up a document from the Mahu Commune CPC Committee titled, "Various Regulations (Draft) for Operating in Accordance With Economic Laws, Good Performance in the Administration and Management of Production, and for Strengthening Production Responsibility Systems." Facing the audience, he said humorously: "This is 'Document Number 1' From Our Mahu Commune..."

Earliest Beginnings

13 The surprising success of "large-scale contracting of responsibilities to teams" as the very first breakthrough in Fengyang's rural reform may be attributed to a policymaker, namely Chen Tingyuan.

He was the 14th first secretary of the Fengyang County CPC Committee. Appointed more than a year earlier, he was almost never in his office, but was outside visiting lower level units.

Fengyang's rural villages had very many problems, but the most prominent, most urgent, and most distressing of all was the large annual outflow of several hundred thousand peasants. In order to solve hunger problems, he requested in the name of the county CPC Committee that the prefecture CPC Committee provide 40 million jin of grain and 3 million yuan in relief funds, otherwise, the common people would truly not be able to survive.

Nevertheless, the legion of people leaving the county continued like a rolling wave, reaching a peak during the great drought of 1978.

On the 27th day of the 12th lunar month, just 3 days before the lunar New Year, Wang Guangyu arrived in the company of Chen Tingyuan at the Qianwang Production Team in Liyuan Commune, which was the village shown in a movie filmed for internal use only. Here they saw only that the whole village was barren. Not only had the cultivation of large tracts of collective fields been abandoned, but even the vegetable gardens in front of and behind the homes of commune members were no longer cultivated. Secretary Wang was very alarmed. He hunted up a shovel, and he and Chen Tingyuan began to dig in a hardened rice field. We used to say often that leader's actions were silent commands but very clearly this command had no effect. The party secretaries from the province and county level were sweaty from their exertions, but aside from several uncomprehending children standing to one side, no commune member came forward to lend support.

Wang Guangyu asked: "Where are the people?"

Chen Tingyuan said with a sigh: "Most have fled the famine!"

Filled with uncertainty, they arrived in the village from the fields. At that time, the provincial CPC Committee had a policy of looking after serious disaster areas on holidays, providing each person with 3 jin of rice, 2 jin of noodles, and $\frac{1}{2}$ jin of meat. They went to all 11 homes in the village, finding empty pots, cold stoves, and no food in all but one in which they found a small piece of pork in a wicker basket.

Wang Guangyu asked: "What don't you buy food?"

A commune member answered: "No money."

Tears brimmed in Wang Guangyu's eyes. They then entered the home of commune member Shi Chengzhu [0670 2052 2691] where all they saw were three people crammed into a dilapidated open-air shed with broken mats and a bed missing a leg.

Leaving Qianwang, Wang Guangyu arrived at the Lin-huiguan railroad station. There, all of the refugees being sent back from Nanjing had dirty faces and disheveled hair and were little more than skin and bones. Their clothes were masses of patches, and sometimes girls did not have enough to cover their bodies... . "Why don't you beg?" Wang Guangyu asked.

"Nothing to eat..." an old man replied.

People seemed to be inured to the suffering.

In the county CPC Committee people said disapprovingly: "Ever since the days of the first Ming Emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang, Fengyang has had a begging 'tradition'..."

At the cadres' conference, Chen Tingyuan flew into a rage: "This is a humiliation of the common people. It is callous! In the coldest days of winter when the ground is covered with ice and snow, you will have to try out...."

14 At the same time, Mahu Commune, which had instituted contracting of production to teams and figuring compensation on the basis of output presented a thriving scene.

Men and women, the old and the young, had fought the drought to plant crops. Every family had not just potatoes, but grain as well. Nevertheless, it was the experiences in Dazhai that were being promoted throughout the country, and the methods used in Mahu Commune were clearly "out of bounds."

For this reason, the county CPC Committee had decided on "no publicity, no promotion, and no prohibition."

The key point in the decision was "no prohibition."

In December 1978, the provincial CPC Committee convened a meeting of county CPC secretaries at which it relayed the spirit of the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee. The clarion call to emancipate thinking pervaded all Anhui. In January 1979, the county CPC Committee convened a meeting of level-4 cadres at which it had Zhan Shaozhou provide a briefing on experiences in figuring compensation on the basis of output. Most people were supportive, while maintaining at the same time that this method was too cumbersome. They generally recommended dividing each production team into various teams, and also contracting to these teams production teams' plow oxen, land, farm implements, and quotas.

When the county CPC Committee discussed the views of the masses, Chen Tingyuan said zestfully: "In Fengyang County today, there are several different kinds of responsibility systems, the main one being the large-scale contracting of responsibilities. In 1961, this form was practiced and was promptly dubbed 'large-scale contracting'..."

This was 20 January, a date that will go down in history forever. The ice and snow had begun to thaw, and in the far distance, the peal of spring thunder could be heard.

This was the first springtime since the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee.

15 On 15 June, just when the wheat harvest was being completed, Wan Li arrived in Fengyang. In a small building at the county CPC Committee guesthouse, he listened to Chen Tingyuan's report on implementation of the responsibility system of "large-scale contracting of responsibilities."

Fengyang was Anhui's poorest county; consequently, the "large-scale contracting of responsibilities" responsibility system most moved Wan Li.

"What is large-scale contracting of responsibilities?"

"The main kind of production responsibility system in Fengyang is large-scale contracting of responsibilities!" Chen Tingyuan reported. "Its substance is large-scale contracting of responsibilities, and more large-scale contracting of responsibilities, continuously and undeviatingly. Once the state's quota has been ensured and the collective's quota satisfied, the remainder is one's own. Today 80 percent of all peasant households in the county are practicing large-scale contracting of responsibilities..."

"What results have you had?"

"The common people say: 'large-scale contracting of responsibilities is good, and the cadres like it fine. If it can do it for 3 to 5 years, we'll burn Chen's straw and eat Chen's grain.' Individuals and collectives will become rich, and the state will have to build warehouses."

After hearing the jingle that the common people had made up, Wan Li laughed heartily, and said loudly: "That's fine! Old Chen, I approve your doing it for 3 to 5 years..."

Secret Meeting

16 However, no experience can be forever immutable. In a certain sense, large-scale contracting of responsibilities was actually just a shift from a "large uproar" to a "small uproar." It was not a complete and fundamental break with the "large in size and collective in nature system" of tri-level [people's communes, production brigades, and production teams] ownership founded on production teams.

Although large-scale contracting of responsibilities achieved marked results in some communes and brigades, quite a few of the most impoverished places continued to be wracked with countless difficulties, even three or five households not working together. The attitude was that small teams are better than big teams, and "individual farming" is better than small teams. They urgently wanted a single family, single household style of family contracting system, namely the "responsibility fields" of 1961.

Any transformation that is genuine and that spurs historical progress can never result from a prescient revelation or be an outstanding individual achievement, but rather must be a creation of the people. When the large-scale contracting of responsibilities in the contracting of production to teams was unfolding in Fengyang, Xiaogang, which had been first to quietly institute the contracting of production to individual households, was rising over Fengyang like the morning star...

17 Let us go back in time to 24 November 1978 when 18 peasants from Xiaogang Production Team in Liyuan Commune, who were shivering in the winter winds, gathered in a thatched hut to hold a secret meeting.

Even though the winds of large-scale contracting of responsibilities had blown to Xiaogang, they failed to stir the initiative of anyone, even though the 113 people were first divided among four work teams, which were later expanded to eight. This was because of the too-small accumulation of wealth, the too-great a lack of cohesiveness among the people, and the too-low fertility of the soil.

Was it possible that the utterly impoverished Xiaogang had even the slightest hope of deliverance?

The crucially important spring planting season forced three peasant "conspirators" to the fore.

The first one was production team leader Yan Junchang [0917 0193 2490], who had wandered as a beggar in Shanghai. When he had his first start in small villages, he was a production team leader involved in poetry competitions in the mornings, and acting in model operas in the afternoons, unable to do more than 3 hours of farm work each day. Angered, he quit. The commune secretary pressured him into serving: "You have to do it whether you want to or not!" So he worked and worked, but the whole production team nearly starved to death, so even the production team leader left the village to wander from place to place...

The second one was deputy production team leader Yan Hongchang [0917 1347 2490] who had lived the life of a mendicant in Jiangxi Province...

The third was a bookkeeper, named Yan Lixue [0917 4539 1331], who had likewise been a beggar...

They asked the oldest man in the village, Guan Tingzhu [7070 1656 3796]: "What do we have to do to be able to have something to eat?"

"There's only one way!"

"And what way is that?"

"Contract production to individual households."

The three men had a private discussion: "If contracting production to individual households can be done well, we should go ahead with it; otherwise, we'll starve to death!"

Death is also a form of motivation. It is a spur that forces people to save their lives. They decided to hold a secret meeting to make some grim choices about the fate of 18 peasant households...

18 The tiny thatched hut was crowded with sad-faced peasants.

They looked at each other in speechless despair.

It was deathly silent.

After heaven knows how long, a booming voice sounded. The more than 60-year-old Yan Guochang [0917 0948 2490] spoke: "Set your minds at ease. Working this way is certain to bring food to eat! Still...still, if you run out of luck, you won't get off easy. You might even be branded an 'active counterrevolutionary,' and when that happens it could be the end of you!"

Another old man, Yan Jiazh [0917 1367 5347], continued: "If you work like this, there may be trouble for everyone in the family, young and old!"

The silence had been broken!

The resentful peasants began to shout all at the same time. "If you get into trouble, we'll help raise your children till they are 18..."

"The whole village will raise them!"

The entire place was in an uproar!"

An extremely ordinary village in the republic was willing to take turns looking after all the members of the production team cadres' family in order to be able to farm the land to maintain their livelihood. This was truly a drama that made people sad and tearful.

The three production team cadres had not shed tears when they fled famine. Now, however, moved by the masses' willingness to sacrifice themselves to support them, their tears gushed like a spring that they were unable to check.

Yan Hongchang fished from his pocket an article he had written much earlier, and said in a quaking voice: "If I'm beheaded, let my head fall into a full pot. It's worth dying to get something to eat, and I won't have any complaint! We have written a pledge that contains two provisions about secretly contracting production to households here in Xiaogang. If you agree with them, the head of each household should put his fingerprint on the pledge..."

"Add another clause!"

"To look after your children till they are 18!"

Yan Hongchang took out his pen and wrote this searing third clause, his eyes brimming with hot tears. Then he took out the ink paste that he had brought with him, and placed it carefully on an old and shabby table.

The heads of the 18 peasant families stood up, each more anxious than the other to get to the table. There, they pressed their forefinger hard on the red ink paste, a cluster of heavy fingerprints from calloused hands standing up, one after another, on the white sextodecimo paper.

The Pledge

1. The contracting of production to individual households is to be kept strictly secret and not divulged to any outsider.

2. When the grain is harvested, the amount to be rendered to the state will be rendered to the state, and the amount to be rendered to the collective will be rendered to the collective. Should there be a large amount of grain, more should be contributed to the state, no one shirking.

3. Should they come to grief because of contracting production to individual households, we are willing to raise the children of village cadres until they are 18 years of age.

Signatories

Yan Hongchang [0917 1347 2490] (fingerprint), Yan Junchang [0917 0193 2490] (fingerprint), Yan Lixue [0917 4539 1331] (fingerprint), Yan Lifu [0917 4539 1381] (fingerprint), Yan Lihua [0917 4539 5478] (fingerprint), Yan Likun [0917 4539 0981] (fingerprint), Yan Jinchang [0917 6855 2490] (fingerprint), Yan Xuechang [0917 1331 2490] (fingerprint), Yan Fuchang [0917 1381 2490] (fingerprint), Yan Jiagi [0917 1367 7871] (fingerprint), Yan Meichang [0917 5019 2490] (fingerprint), Yan Guoping [0917 0948 1627] (fingerprint), Yan Guozhi [0917 0948 1627] (fingerprint), Guan Youshen [7070 0645 3947] (fingerprint), Guan Youjiang [7070 0645 3068] (fingerprint), Wu Tingzhu [0791 1656 3796] (fingerprint), Guan Youzhang [7070 0645 4545] (fingerprint), Han Guoyun [7281 0948 0061] (fingerprint)

24 November 1978

Today, this "secret document" is on display in the Chinese Revolutionary Museum, where it everlastingly stands in testimony to the violent storm that swept across the good earth of China 10 years ago.

I Think You Can Run Off Anywhere!

News about Xiaogang's actions spread, nevertheless. The commune CPC Committee secretary, Zhang Mingliou [1728 2494 2869], was dumbfounded. He simply could not understand how these people could have such audacity. They seemed to have eaten the heart of a bear and the gall of a leopard!

Zhang Mingliou had joined the party in 1954. He was straightforward and honest in his dealings with people, and he diligently and conscientiously carried out the instructions of superiors in a proficient and model fashion, never overstepping the bounds even a little bit. These were the standards he lived and worked by.

Once at a production team leaders' conference, Zhang Mingliou asked: "I heard you people over in Xiaogang are doing 'individual farming'?"

"No!"

The Xiaogang production team cadres went out of their way to cover up.

Zhang Mingliou, his face livid with rage, roared. "You say no, but the masses say you are! The wheel of history cannot be reversed. Liu Shaoqi, the country's president, promoted the 'three privates and the one contract' [private plots, enterprises having sole responsibility for their own profits or losses, free markets, and fixing quotas on a household basis], and the 'four freedoms' [freedom to buy or sell land, to hire labor, to make loans, and to engage in business], didn't he? This is an out-and-out rehash of the same thing! In Xiaogang, you all think you can pee farther than anyone else, and that you have Liu Shaoqi's ability! I think you can run off anywhere..."

In order to pull Xiaogang back to the "socialist road," Zhang Mingliou employed forceful administrative measures: "Anything the Communist Party provides for planting rice, making loans, and getting chemical fertilizer, Xiaogang cannot enjoy! I have not yet fully investigated the problem of your 'individual farming', but once it proves to be true, it will be severely dealt with!"

This amounted to strangling Xiaogang!

Yan Junchang, Yan Hongchang, and Yan Lixue, the three production team cadres, were so frightened their legs trembled and they poured out endless grief to each other.

What bothered them was that they had not acted for themselves alone, but so that the 18 households in the production team could manage to get something to eat, so how could a commune secretary not allow them to do it willy-nilly?

Suddenly, the situation had become grim.

Early one morning, Zhang Mingliou arrived at Xiaogang. When he left to return to the commune, Yan Hongchang accompanied him for a full 2 li, taking the opportunity both to enlist the commune secretary's understanding and get his support: "Secretary Zhang, Xiaogang is extremely poor and production is really in bad shape! I never spoke to you about it before, but today I will tell you the truth. We are really contracting production to individual households!..."

Even though Zhang Minglou had heard about it earlier, he felt alarmed and panicky upon hearing the information verified. His five sense organs seemed in danger of shifting position, and he stared at Yan Hongchang with a look of intolerance.

Yan Hongchang implored him: "Secretary Zhang, Just don't worry! Even if they cut my head off, I would not say you had allowed me to do it..."

"It's not worth it!"

"There is really no way out!"

"Even if you were to say I did not let you do it, I couldn't get away with it!"

The peasants were afraid of hunger, and the cadres were afraid of losing their official position.

Zhang Minglou did not oppose contracting production to individual households per se. If he had a document permitting it, he would support Xiaogang in continuing it. But it was because he did not have a documentary basis that he was so worried. This not only tied the masses' hands, it also tied his own.

20 The stars migrate and the Big Dipper turns, marking the passage of time.

The ocean tides fall and rise.

After a great life-and-death struggle, the controversy over contracting production to individual households abated.

And what of Zhang Minglou?

He was transferred from Liyuan Commune to the assistant directorship of the research office in Banqiao District. In the early days of China's rural reform, some people termed him a leader with the "strongest party spirit," but today when the great tide of reform is rolling along, he is no longer heeded.

When I was saying good-bye to Xiaogang, I suggested to county committee propaganda department deputy director Sun [1327] that I go see Zhang Minglou.

We reached Banqiao District at twilight and stepped into a house lit by a dim lamp in a small rustic courtyard. Sitting there before me was a bronze-faced old man. He could not speak eloquently by any means, but he spoke with strength and profundity.

Meeting a strange visitor, he did not avoid this abruptly changing historical period nor dwell on his own fate, much less fend off the visitor. He sat in a rattan chair

opposite a small table, his two honest eyes peering steadily at me through the dim light, behaving politely, dignified, and maintaining the caution and dignity of a leader.

He spoke with anguish: "...I got it from both ends. My superiors said do not do it, but my subordinates insisted on doing it. It was really difficult to handle! Why didn't I think of contracting production to individual households? The villages and the land were deserted, with no one to farm. They had all left. I also had a taste of having nothing to eat. In 1961, I was so hungry I could not travel. When I had to go to a meeting elsewhere, I had to rest seven or eight times in a distance of just several li. My legs were swollen. Wherever I touched them, a dimple remained. I also wanted to change the poverty! In the autumn of 1977, Liyuan Commune experimented with bonuses for exceeding output, providing that everything in excess of 200 jin per mu belonged to the one who farmed it. But later on, the county sent a propaganda team around that said: 'This is wrong. You cannot do this!' As a result, it was stopped! In the autumn of 1978, the people were so poor that they wanted to divide up into teams. Unless they divided up, they would never be able to go on living. By the spring of 1979, the county agreed to the division, but it would only allow contracting to teams, not to households. The masses were still dissatisfied and quietly got together of their own accord to begin contracting production to individual households, the way they did in Xiaogang production teams. But the authorities would not permit this. Anyone contracting production to individual households would have his party registration canceled! I had to be 'tough' with Xiaogang, cutting them off from growing rice and from loans at once. Otherwise, it could not have been stopped; contracting production to individual households would have expanded. At that time, no one knew how firm policies were. Since I could not figure out intentions, I did not dare permit contracting to go on openly. I am a member of the Communist Party, and I was also commune secretary; I had to be responsible to the party..."

He spoke very frankly and very sincerely.

Possibly even he himself could not imagine how staunchly upholding the party's instructions might blow back on him. Reform is not simply a matter of solving hunger and poverty in daily life. One also has to solve ideological hunger and poverty. It would be improper to be too critical of Zhang Minglou, because that was a confining era.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that such a tragedy will not be repeated on the good earth of the motherland!

"Eat Peanuts First, Then Hold the Meeting!"

21 Not long before he was to go to Beijing to assume duties as director of the State Agricultural Commission, Wan Li finally completed a trip to Xiaogang, which enthralled him. Early in the morning, as soon as a timely

snow stopped, it was very quickly melted by the sun, which broke through the fog. The bumpy road was slippery and the weather was dry and cold. The northwest wind wailed shrilly with the sound of a sharply struck violin string.

The visit of the first secretary of the provincial CPC Committee to this impoverished village in an out-of-the-way place might be said to be the first since the beginning of time.

The village was agog!

Stepping through the mud, Wan Li went from door to door making calls. When he came to the home of Guan Youjiang [7070 0645 3068], which had many members but very few people who were able to work, and saw the several thousand jin of grain stored there, he said with heartfelt praise: "Well, this time the 'beggar's lair' will not be hungry again!"

Wan Li entered Yan Hongchang's house again.

Yan Hongchang complained to Wan Li: "Some people say that we are 'reversing the wheel of history' and undermining socialism by contracting production to individual households..."

Wan Li was clearly angry and replied gravely: "Tell anyone who says this that if they have a better way to make the peasants rich, then do it their way. If they do not have a better way but say that you are 'turning back the wheel' or 'undermining the foundation,' not letting you do it, let me, Wan Li, handle the case for you..."

Everyone felt relieved to hear that.

"I also come from a farming village..."

Wan Li sat on a wooden bench reminiscing about distant events as though engaging in small talk. He talked about how he had herded cattle for landlords when he was small, and how he became a guerrilla when he was 18 years old. He spoke of his shepherdlike life at Suwu in the northwest during the years of turmoil, and he talked about seeing a family farm during a visit to Japan that had two rows of small buildings, a tractor, and a small automobile. He shuttled back and forth through history, the years interweaving. Finally he returned to the description contained in that survey report of all Xiaogang being fated to flee from famine.

Wan Li said sympathetically and emotionally: "We did not understand fully just how backward the countryside is. We never realized the people's lives were so hard and so sad. I also knew that people starved, but I didn't realize it was so many, or in such detail. The Chinese people have such great patience..."

He had visited more than 10 houses in a row, finally arriving at Yan Junchang's house. By now, the whole village had congregated here, even old women with bound feet had come limping along to get there.

Yan Junchang brought a wicker basket of freshly roasted peanuts to present to Wan Li on his journey.

Wan Li waved them away politely saying, "I don't eat them. I don't eat them."

"They're free!" Yan Junchang said humorously.

Everyone laughed.

An old woman said, "Secretary Wan, we wanted to give you something to eat before, but now that we have a lot you don't care about it..."

"That's good!" Wan Li said nodding his head. "I'll take a few to the members of the Standing Committee to let them taste the fruits of your contracting production to individual households!"

At the meeting of the Standing Committee of the provincial CPC Committee, Wan Li dumped the tightly packed peanuts with a splat on the conference table, saying joyfully, "Let's eat some peanuts first and then hold the meeting..."

Not long afterward, Wan Li left Anhui where he had worked for more than 2 years, and also left the good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He that was just beginning to take off.

This was an historical farewell!

It was a farewell to poverty.

It was a farewell to degredation.

It was also a farewell to hunger...

"If it's food you need, see Wan Li."

This eulogy from the peasant's innermost heart became the send-off phrase when he went to a position in the State Council.

22 The common people of Xiaogang were profoundly attached for Wan Li. In April, 1968 when State Council Deputy Premier Wan Li visited Anhui after a 6-year absence, he telephoned the Fengyang County CPC Committee from Hefei to say that he wanted to visit the Xiaogang Production Team again.

The people of Xiaogang lost no time in spreading the news.

Of their own free will, they braved the springtime chill to haul crushed stone to fill in potholes on the dirt road so that his automobile would not jolt too much.

They waited for what seemed like an endless time for the arrival of Wan Li.

One day passed!

Another day passed!

Yet another day passed!

There was no sign of Wan Li on the dirt road to the village.

Illness prevented Wan Li from making his second trip to Xiaogang, and he was forced to take an airplane via Shanghai to return to Beijing. Before leaving, he again telephoned to ask the Fengyang County CPC Committee to relay his apologies to Xiaogang.

Wan Li cherished fond memories of Xiaogang.

And Xiaogang also cherished memories of the respected and honored Wan Li.

Meditation at the Tomb of a Ming Emperor

23 Fengyang was the birthplace of Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty.

People were by no means unfamiliar with Fengyang.

Even though one may not have set foot on this expanse of land, the poverty of the place could be understood from the mournful and tragic folk song that goes:

*Talk about Fengyang, tell about Fengyang.
Fengyang was once a very fine place.
But since the reign of Emperor Zhu.
Nine out of 10 years have seen famine.
Rich families sell their horses and mules.
Poor families sell their sons.
Bondservant families with no sons to sell.
Wander the land begging with a flower drum.*

Zhu Yuanzhang was the only emperor of peasant origins in China's history to have founded a dynasty.

Styling his reign Hongwu, seven years after becoming emperor he returned to his birthplace in Anhui Province. Gazing out at the rolling hills with a feeling of exhilaration, he bestowed the name "Phoenix Mountains" on them, and the city nestled among the Phoenix Mountains as "being a palace with the power of a phoenix that seemed to be flying into the sun".

This is the source of the ancient appellation Fengyang [Phoenix Sun].

Today, as a historical successor, one of my desires was to pay respects to the tombs of the Ming emperors, which occasionally formed a part of my reveries.

I was rarely so disillusioned!

I was rarely so disappointed!

They [the tombs of the early Ming emperors located near Nanjing] lacked both the splendor of the ancient palace and the majesty of the 13 tombs [of the later Ming emperors located outside Beijing]. They seemed like a forsaken rubble of tiles and stones reclining in a vast sodden wilderness. The lofty pavilions containing stone memorial tablets no longer exist. Some of the facing stone animals that line the avenue leading to the tombs are missing, and the graves are bumpy protruberances, bleak and devoid of majesty. "South of the old city, the wall lies in ruins, grass grows wild around desolate stone tablets, and myriad horses lie in gloomy palaces." Remembering this ancient ode, I was smitten with sadness.

As I stood before the stone memorial tablet that Zhu Yuanzhang had personally selected at the imperial tombs, I could not help sigh over and over with sadness...

24 How to deal properly with the peasants is the key to deciding China's destiny.

During those times, Zhu Yuanzhang had a subject in the Hanlin Academy, named Zhu Sheng, who urged a national policy of "build high walls, store grain everywhere, and delay in terming yourself emperor." Zhu Yuanzhang applauded his approval, "decreed a secret tent meeting," and went on to win all of China. But, he pushed his countrymen into another abyss of suffering, which finally led to the collapse of his dynasty when another leader, Li Zicheng, engineered a widespread rebellion.

We also followed Zhu Sheng's strategy, raising the slogan, "dig tunnels deep, store grain everywhere, and never seek hegemony," the results of which were not good. The ultraleftist line impoverished the peasantry and virtually spelled an end to our ancient civilized land, possessed of 5,000 years of history, and virtually submerged a great, unyielding, and enduring people.

A 330,000-character document titled "Exploration of the Family Contracting System" that Zhou Yueli had written, and which he gave to me in Hefei, made me see the light. The tragedy of Stalin in the changeover from Lenin largely verifies his thesis. He used his own intense personal suffering to show the crucial role of the peasant problem in the consolidation of the CPC's rise to power.

He wrote profoundly—"Ours is an agricultural country with a population of 1 billion, 800 million of whom are peasants. The circumstances of the peasantry has an extremely great influence on development of the

national economy and the consolidation of political power. Unity and reliance on the broad masses of peasants should be the point of departure for our party's policies. When we support the peasant family contract system, some people say this is pandering to the small-scale agriculture mentality. When we propagandize the principle of to each according to work, allowing some peasants to become rich first, some people say this is advocacy of polarization. When we support specialized household development of commodity production, some people say this is assisting the selfishness of small-scale producers. When we advocate full production authority and autonomy in distribution, some people say this is abandonment of the planned economy, etc. These divergent views are essentially a reflection of how to regard the peasant problem... Only by dealing properly with the peasantry will it be possible to rely closely on the peasants. To depart from confidence in the peasantry is to depart from the fundamental standpoint of the historical materialist view that the masses of the people are creators of history, with the result that agricultural reform loses its foundation..."

China's history is, in a certain sense, a history of the peasantry.

25 When I said farewell to Fengyang, I could not help turning my head to look at the four arresting large characters atop the mottled and dilapidated city wall, "Foundation for 10,000 Generations." Like the stars above, it seemed to be making a statement to successors. It does not really matter in which year of which era it was written or whose hand wrote it. So long as we understand its profound connotation, that is enough!

The soil is the cradle on which we depend for survival! Let us embrace you with abandon, ardently kiss you, and spare no effort to develop you. You alone are the source of our life and the source of our ideals that we cannot abandon for an instant!

Chapter 6. A Tragedy Not To Be Repeated—1980: The Great Anhui Flood

History Continues To Testify

1 The Earth, which nurtures us like a mother's body, is in fact a disaster-ridden heavenly body. Unpredictable Mother Nature not only creates scorching droughts, but also creates floods in which people drown.

In 1980, a flood such as occurs only once every 20 years engulfed Anhui Province, which had just been contracting production to individual households for a year.

From January through September, several torrential rains fell one after another, pouring in sheets from the sky, and causing cascades of water to descend from the mountains. The Chang Jiang rose precipitously to only 0.62 meters below the danger line, and the Huai He stood at only 0.88 meters below the danger line. At four

points along its course, the Huai He broke its dikes, causing floods. The two large reservoirs in the Dabie Shan region, namely Meishan and Xianghongdian, approached the limits of their capacity. Chao Hu was only 0.5 meters below the danger line. Because of the rise in the Chang Jiang, it became very difficult to discharge the lake water. Storage ponds were full, and ditches and rivers overflowed, causing inundation of villages and large tracts of farmland. On 15 July alone, 9.22 million mu in Anhui became a disaster area, seriously threatening the lives of between 400,000 and 500,000 people.

On 18 July, another even larger storm battered Hefei, the capital of Anhui Province. Several main highways connecting Hefei with Anqing, Shouxian, Bengbu, and Nanjing were completely cut because of water in low-lying sections and the destruction of bridges.

This was an exceptionally big flood disaster such as Anhui had not experienced in 26 years since 1954, no crop being harvested from several million mu of land.

In order to win victory in fighting the flood and warding off peril, the provincial CPC Committee allocated 2.35 million jin of grain and 11.75 million jin of coal for civilian laborers along the Chang Jiang and appropriated 6 million yuan from the local treasury for use in fighting the disaster. This small sum of money was sufficient only to fight the flood; it did not help rescue work. In order to make up for the shortage of money, the Anhui Provincial CPC Committee urgently requested the CPC Central Committee and the State Council to provide 8 million yuan for flood prevention, 8 million yuan for disaster relief, and 17,000 tons of chemical fertilizer. However, the State Council provided only 2 million yuan for flood prevention and 3,000 tons of chemical fertilizer, amounts far from enough to meet needs.

"Hope for further appropriation of disaster relief funds and supplies!"

The State Council constantly received appeals from Anhui, but after 10 years of turmoil, China was broke and unable to provide any additional assistance.

Anhui was in a desperate situation!

2 Anhui, which was incinerated in 1978, had become a boundless marshland just 2 years later.

A pervasive feeling of anxiety and peril assailed people.

Would beggars once again engulf this land that had only just revived?

3 During 1980, Anhui's grain output decreased 2.2 billion jin, a figure that makes one breathless!

The production responsibility system of contracting production to individual households faced a serious challenge from nature. Nevertheless, the power of contracting production to individual households gained cohesiveness and release from yet another great historical adversity.

One event that offers food for thought occurred as follows:

In Chuxian Prefecture, where 70 percent of the counties practiced large-scale contracting of responsibilities, every county showed an increase, the gross output of grain—eaking the 3 billion jin mark, a 9.4-percent increase over the all-time high year of 1979. Liuan Prefecture, in which contracting production to individual households extended to 56 percent of households, output remained basically the same, with Feixi and Huoqiu Counties showing an increase almost everywhere. On the other hand, in Shucheng County, which had not yet instituted contracting production to individual households, output decreased by an enormous 100 million jin. In Anqing Prefecture, which steadfastly refused to practice the contracting of production to individual households, every county saw a decline in output.

When "great uproar" production teams faced an exceptionally large flood disaster and were at the end of their tether, production teams contracting production to individual households rushed harvesting day and night, thrashed with flails, and removed husks by hand, keeping losses to a minimum. "Large uproar" production teams planted autumn crops only with great difficulty, and found field care extremely difficult to do. When workers were sent to the fields, they did not hoe. As a result, large areas of fields produced no harvest. By contrast, production teams contracting production to individual households went to the fields at dawn, and even on rainy days they donned bamboo hats and used their hands in place of hoes.

Contracting production to individual households ultimately stood the test of nature.

Tragedy did not by any means ...

The End. The Great Regression—The Great Hurdling—Contracting Production to Individual Households: A Historical Monument

A New Crossroads

I Poverty has its problems, and wealth has its woes.

Applied to the villages of Anhui that practiced contracting production to individual households, what was the greatest problem?

The curse of a grain glut!

Upon first arriving in Anhui, looking at the dark clusters of thatched houses along the road aroused a gloomy feeling. Now, when I enter a thatched house, I am astounded to find that virtually every one is piled with grain that would take several years to eat.

At Qianni Production Team in Mahu Commune, Fengyang, sitting in the home of production team leader Ni Xingbang [0242 5281 6721], which was furnished with entirely new furniture, drinking clear green Huangshan mist tea and looking at the grain piled high, I expressed my congratulations to him.

To my surprise, he gave a long sigh—"It's difficult!"

"What's difficult?"

"I can't sell it all! When people were fleeing famine, they wished for grain in their dreams, and damaged their eyes envisioning it! Today, grain is piled into mountains, and there is a limit to what the state can buy. All night long, I squat at the entrance to the grain procurement station unable to get in line. I could offer it for sale in the free markets, but nowadays everyone is so rich, who would want to go to the bother?"

"So what did you do?"

"Went into sideline occupations!"

He led me enthusiastically to his family oil-bearing crops processing plant. The building was old and run-down, but all the machinery was new. Then he took me to several homes, and almost every home had such a plant. A village notorious for its beggars has not only freed itself from hunger and the threat of death, but also is making a transition from agriculture to a combination of agriculture and industry for a new leap in rural transformation.

In Feixi County, the "curse of too much grain" is even more prominent. This county, which has a 5-million-jin grain storage capacity in ordinary years, has more than 100 million jin in storage, and an overflow of 12 million jin is piled high in 57 open-air locations. The grain stations' unwillingness to buy more grain also stems from their own set of difficulties. They have problems shipping it. In 1979, plans called for the shipment of 38 million jin of wheat from the county, but despite efforts from many quarters, 30 million jin of grain remains unshipped.

Gratifying bumper harvests also occasion unexpected troubles. The public is disgusted with grain procurement units and, if this goes on, it is bound to stifle peasant enthusiasm for growing grain. Furthermore, in many places the peasants are already unwilling to grow much grain.

In view of the difficulty in selling grain in Feixi County, Comrade Zhao Ziyang made the following important ruling as a result of uneasiness—Please make arrangements at once to purchase more grain from Anhui and ship it for the central government grain department (paying the negotiated price for it). Today, we are using foreign exchange to import grain, while, at the same time, the peasants have grain that they are unable to sell and some places have grain that they are unable to ship. What a strange situation this is! This situation must be halted no matter what. The same applies to places other than Anhui that have the same situation.

2 New problems engender new thinking, and new thinking engenders new actions.

The peasants have a lot of grain on hand and they have a lot of free time. No longer are they content to lead the traditional, monotonous, repetitive, and boring life of going to work at sunup and going to bed at sundown. No longer are they content with the pathetic dream of having "three mu of land and an ox, children, a wife, and a warm bed." They are leaving their squat farmhouses, leaving the muddy roads, and attempting to catch hold of the cord of a different destiny, and go to meet a more splendid and brilliant scene of richness!

How should this new trend be dealt with?

Wang Yuzhao [3769 6735 2507], first secretary of the Chuxian Prefecture CPC Committee, wrote a very insightful 150,000-character article about this, entitled "Large-Scale Contracting of Responsibilities and the Great Trend."

He wrote as follows:

"Large-scale contracting of responsibilities has created a great trend toward rural reform in contemporary China, and it has also fostered alternatives to traditional agriculture, namely modernization and a commodity economy. This has stimulated another traditional competitor to the rural economy, development of the urban economy.

"Consequently, when people look around to the left and right, they are astounded to discover the following grim reality: In the new great wave of reform, it is large-scale contracting that is the contender and the challenger. Large-scale contracting of responsibilities has fully freed the energies of the social cell that is the family, and the cohesiveness and freeing of this energy has enabled the peasants gradually to become independent commodity producers. A commodity production bloc in which hundreds of millions of peasants are the main body is emerging rapidly.

"Large-scale contracting of responsibilities has enabled the peasants to free themselves from their worrisome predicament and has caused agriculture to depend on scientific and technical progress for steady development

of productivity. All the same, it is still held back by the restraints of traditional agriculture, and is wavering at a crossroads at its present level of development..."

Anhui's rural villages are at just such a crossroads.

China's rural villages are also at just such a crossroads.

Triumph over hunger is not the same thing as triumph over poverty. That historical obstacles have been surmounted does not mean that future obstacles will be surmounted. We have thrown down the gauntlet with contracting production to individual households. How will our splendid and numerous peasant brethren make a new leap at this second crossroads?

This is the second step in rural reform.

The first step in reform was brief; the second step in reform is more daunting, more momentous, and more serious; thus, the duration is also longer...

Clues to the Future

3 During the period of my visit to Fengyang, Hu Cheng-gong [5170 2052 0501], the incumbent deputy county commissioner and concurrent first secretary of the county CPC Committee, made an appointment with me to have a long, confidential talk.

He was the 15th county CPC Committee secretary. In 1965, he graduated from the animal husbandry department of the Anhui Provincial Academy of Agriculture, and, in 1986, following Chen Tingyuan's transfer to become deputy chairman of the provincial people's congress, he assumed duties in Fengyang.

He was not a mover and a shaker, but rather a person of genial disposition, gentle and cultivated; a classic intellectual sort.

He enjoyed a fine reputation in Fengyang, and he had risen fairly rapidly earlier, so why was it that he had gone downward again in recent years. So there was very great pressure to let me come at this time...

Slowly and carefully, he began a calm narration.

"Can Fengyang ever stop exaggerating? This hurts the people, it hurts the party, and it hurts oneself. I would not talk about it except to you, but you seem to be practical and realistic. Last year, during the bumper harvest, a wheat harvest of 350 million jin was reported, which was the same output as for 1985. When I held a seminar in the villages, many cadres and members of the public said that disasters had reduced the wheat crop. So, at the yearend statistical conference, I said, 'no matter how much was reported, we should certainly be practical and realistic!' As a result, the statistics given were 320 million jin, a 30 million jin cut for a yearend total grain output of 960 million jin. To be on the safe side, the

figure was shortened another 20 million jin. Because of this, some people reported to Beijing that I had shut everybody up! Factual reporting of output and showing some surplus is easy to say, but hard to do. Were I to make a fuss about what had been reported, people would say I was trying to make my predecessor look bad. So it is that there are very many difficulties working in Fengyang.

"How can you continue to implement the policy of making people prosperous by working on agriculture alone? Wouldn't it be better to develop rural industrialization? Large-scale contracting of responsibilities is applicable not only to agriculture, but to industry as well. This year township and town enterprises have advanced rather rapidly. Last year, it was 110 million yuan worth, and this year it is 170 million, a 60 million yuan increase. This has never happened in Fengyang before."

"China is a country in which the denominator is very large. We regularly read in the press about annual grain output being so many million jin. China has a population of 1 billion, so, by the time the grain is divided up, very little remains for each person. Even if there is a 1 billion jin increase, that averages out to only 1 jin per capita. Therefore, relying solely on the soil will not work. The amount of cultivated land for the country as a whole is 1 and 1/2 mu per capita, and this represents an advantage for rural industry. Fengyang has plentiful resources. It has gold mines, quartz mines, and limestone quarries. With sensible development, the goals of the second step of reform can be attained..."

He sat facing me, talking tirelessly. He was concerned about the present, and looked head to the future. Surprisingly, the blueprint for the Fengyang of tomorrow was so vivid in his mind, which was filled with new conceptions!

The peasants rely on the soil, and the soil also binds the peasants to it. The peasants win the soil through their own hard work, yet they must say farewell to the soil if they are to open even wider vistas. This conflict between mutual dependence and mutual separation creates clues to the future.

Emancipation from the soil holds the seeds of man's emancipation.

4 "The first step in China's rural reform may be compared to the famous opera, the *Bao Criminal Case*, and the second step in reform may be compared to the famous opera, *Capturing Cao Cao and Letting Him Go*!"

"An interesting metaphor!"

"By the *Bao Criminal Case* is meant caring to act and daring to reform; *Capturing Cao Cao and Letting Him Go* applies to the laws regulating price. During the first step in reform, from the experiments with contracting production to individual households of 1979 to the

spread throughout the country of contracting production to individual households of 1984, reform action consisted mostly of building agricultural responsibility systems! In the second step of reform, during the period beginning 1985 until the present time, reform has consisted mostly of on-again/off-again holding down and letting go of agricultural product prices. The peasants have not been very satisfied with this and it has hurt their enthusiasm for production. If one says that the first step in reform broke the tri-level ownership system based on production teams, then the breakthrough that the second step of reform made was 'centralized procurement and centralized marketing.' Without solution of these problems, the fruits of the first step in reform are in danger of being lost..."

"Can you explain this in concrete terms?"

"The nationwide bumper harvest of 1984 broke the all-time high, so the very great subsidization of agricultural products in state centralized procurement and centralized marketing produced financial deficits. Thereafter, the state did not practice centralized procurement and centralized marketing. It removed restrictions on rural markets, which made the peasants very happy; however, among urban residents, the reaction was strong against a rise in the market prices of agricultural products. Thus, the state again restricted prices of agricultural products, and the peasants were dissatisfied once again. Such on-again/off-again holding down and releasing of prices..."

This was the record of a dialogue I had in Hefei with Xin Sheng [6580 3932], director of the Agricultural Committee Survey and Research Office.

He acquainted me with numerous personages and stories from the Anhui peasants' carrying out of the strategic shift, which were more splendid epics and more profound eulogies than contracting production to individual households.

Regrettably, this is not within the purview of this reportorial literature, whose purpose is to show rural China on the eve of reform.

But it is hoped that from the good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai will come news of victory soon!

The Inspiration of the Huai He

5 "Go wherever you may, there is no place like the banks of the Huai." Since ancient times, people have eulogized the fertile and bountiful banks along the Huai He in this heartfelt way.

The Huai He, a river on fire!

The Huai He, a river of liquid gold!

Oh, Huai He, I yearn for you; I love you dearly; I acclaim you; I praise you. You are like a loving and passionate panorama of sails beckoning to the boats in my totally enamored soul.

The first time I saw the Huai He was at dawn. When someone said we had arrived at the Huai He, it awakened me from slumber and I could not wait to get to a window to look off into the distance where I saw only a misty anse through which a very long ribbon wound from south to north. I had the impression that the Huai He was the grandest river in the world, and in the moment that the train began to cross the great steel bridge, I found that the Huai He was grand. Are those the shifting sands of history or the sediment of the years? A flotilla of powered boats tells us wordlessly...

The second time I saw the Huai He happened to be in the early evening. This was my farewell to the Huai He. I jumped up from my seat, and looked down on it from the window, reluctant to say good-bye. Moonlight shone as through fine gauze upon the hazy wilderness. The murmuring Huai He seemed like a gentle and quiet pianist playing the magical *Moonlight Sonata*. Was I lost in a reverie or looking forward to the future? The bobbing lights of fishing boats twinkled before my dreamy eyes...

Grand and magical were the most profound impressions that the Huai He gave me.

The Huai He is truly grand. From the rebellion of Chen Sheng and Wu Guang at Dazexiang to the Battle at Kaixia between Liu Bang and Xiang Yu; From the confrontation between the state of Qin and the state of Jin in the battle of the Fei Shui to the contest at Shunchang when Jin and Song went into battle; from the high flying flags and banners of the Hongjin [Red Kerchief] Army to the camp fires of the Nian [Torch Bearer] Army of blood and tears; and from the south Anhui incident's fervent dirge to the loudly sung victory song of the Huaihai campaign... history has played countless tragedies and heroic plays here, and has left behind countless humiliations and exultations!

The Huai He is truly magical. From great famine to great drought, and from "responsibility fields" to contracting production to individual households, it heralded China's rural reform. It was this way that a long-sought and quiet reform swept across 9.6 million square kilometers of land to unfold in the east a trend toward unstoppable reform. Its origin and development poses an aggressive challenge to old systems and old ideas that block development of productivity. The ancient and isolated rural villages of China are creating new achievements and new miracles.

6 Good-bye to the ancient land of China's rural reform!

The Chinese reform that is called the "second reform" began in the rural villages, and Anhui Province is the source of China's rural reform. All China and the whole world are watching the solemn and stirring story being played out on this heroic land located on both banks of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He.

This story is only just beginning!

An era of hunger has come to an end in this way, and the curtain has been opened on a splendid prelude to China's rural reform in this way. A great strategic shift that will determine the fate of China's 800 million peasants has begun in this way...

When the wheels of the train rolled on to the good earth of the Chang Jiang and the Huai He, the stirring sound of Comrade Zhao Ziyang's political report to the 13th party congress resounded in my ears—"The achievements of the past 9 years have come about through the unified struggle of people of all nationalities throughout the country. Please permit me, in the name of the Communist Party of China, to thank the people for their confidence in and support of our party. Every Chinese man and woman who has personally experienced the great transformation that has taken place during these 9 years, and who has contributed his or her own energy to it, and all the sons and grandsons concerned with the destiny of the motherland have reason to feel proud about our country's historical transformation."

Written in the 10th Springtime Following the 3d Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee

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